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ABSTRACT

Different aspects of the experiences of children and adults with learning disabilities are explored in the 29 articles in this publication. Articles are divided into seven topical sections. "I Am My Learning Disability" includes personal narratives on overcoming learning disabilities and coping with the disability. "Learning Disabilities and Delinquency" deals with the justice system and describes an individual with a learning disability who is incarcerated. "The Experience of Siblings" addresses the feelings and relationships of siblings of children with learning disabilities. "The LD Experience" discusses self-esteem issues of individuals with learning disabilities. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is also reviewed. An adult with learning disabilities describes her journey to become an attorney. "Independent Living" includes an article on self-determination and one on moving from an institution to independence. A section titled "Features" has articles on recording for the blind and medical screening of children with disabilities. "Schooling" addresses issues in choosing a school for students with special needs, handwriting, and remediating language deficits in a language-based curriculum. The articles in "College Experience" focus on post-college employment and helping children with learning disabilities in postsecondary education. An extensive resource list on applicable legislation, organizations, school testing issues, college resources, and other issues is also included. (CR)

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Their World

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES 1995

ED 399 687

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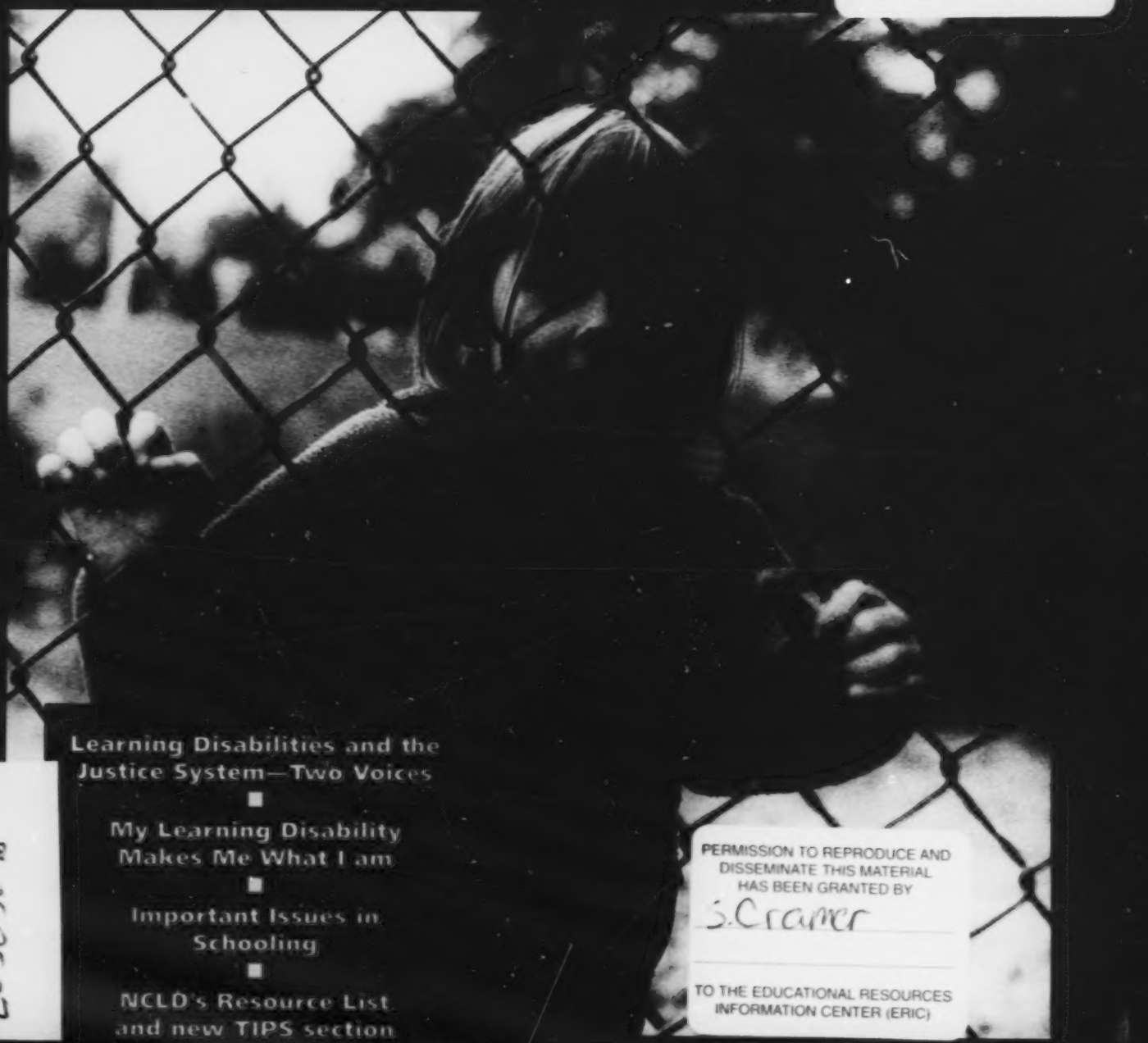

Learning Disabilities and the Justice System—Two Voices

My Learning Disability Makes Me What I am

Important Issues in Schooling

NCLD's Resource List and new TIPS section

Ec 30528

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ABOUT LEARNING DISABILITIES

Millions of children and adults across the United States suffer from learning disabilities (LD). Neurological in origin, learning disabilities impede a person's ability to store, process or produce information. Learning disabilities can affect one's ability to read, write, speak, or compute math, and can impair socialization skills.

Individuals with LD are generally of average or above average intelligence, but the disability creates a gap between ability and performance.

Early diagnosis and appropriate intervention and support are vital for the individual with LD. Without early and adequate identification and intervention, learning disabilities can lead to serious consequences for the individual and for society—complete loss of self-esteem, and consequently, school drop-out, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, illiteracy and other critical problems. Some facts:

About learning disabilities:

- 15-20 percent of the U.S. population have some form of learning disability, according to the most recent information from the National Institutes of Health.
- Learning disabilities often run in families.
- It is believed that learning disabilities are never outgrown, but can be compensated.
- Attention deficits and hyperactivity sometimes co-occur with learning disabilities, but not always.
- Learning disabilities have distinct characteristics and should not be confused with the following handicaps: mental retardation, autism, deafness, blindness and behavioral disorders.
- Federal law, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, formerly PL 94-142) mandates that all children with learning disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.

About the consequences of learning disabilities:

- 60 percent of adults with severe literacy problems have undetected or untreated learning disabilities.
- 50 percent of juvenile delinquents tested were found to have undetected LD. When offered remedial services, their recidivism rates dropped to below two percent.
- More than 50 percent of students receiving special education services in public schools nationwide have LD.
- 85-90 percent of school-aged children who manifest learning disabilities have their basic deficits in language and reading.
- 45 percent of students identified with learning disabilities drop out of high school, contributing greatly to the nation's school drop-out rates. (This does not include the students who are not identified and drop out.)
- Up to 60 percent of adolescents in treatment for substance abuse have learning disabilities.
- Learning disabilities and substance abuse are the most common impediments to keeping welfare recipients from becoming and remaining employed, according to the 1992 report from the Office of the Inspector General.

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THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES,

NCLD's mission is to promote public awareness and understanding of, and provide national leadership on behalf of, children and adults with learning disabilities so they may achieve their potential and enjoy full participation in our society.

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- National Information & Referral Service
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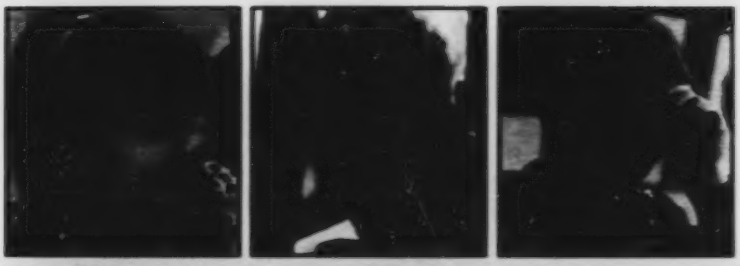

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Children and adults whose photographs appear in *Their World* are not necessarily learning disabled, and are not directly associated with the article in which they appear.

Their World

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A MESSAGE FROM ANNE FORD

Chairman of the
National Center for Learning Disabilities

It is a great personal pleasure to greet you through the pages of THEIR WORLD. This seventeenth issue shows once again how significant the issues continue to be and what a profound impact learning disabilities have on those affected. Especially to our new readers, I am pleased to welcome you to our magazine and hope you will be rewarded and helped in your journey through its pages.

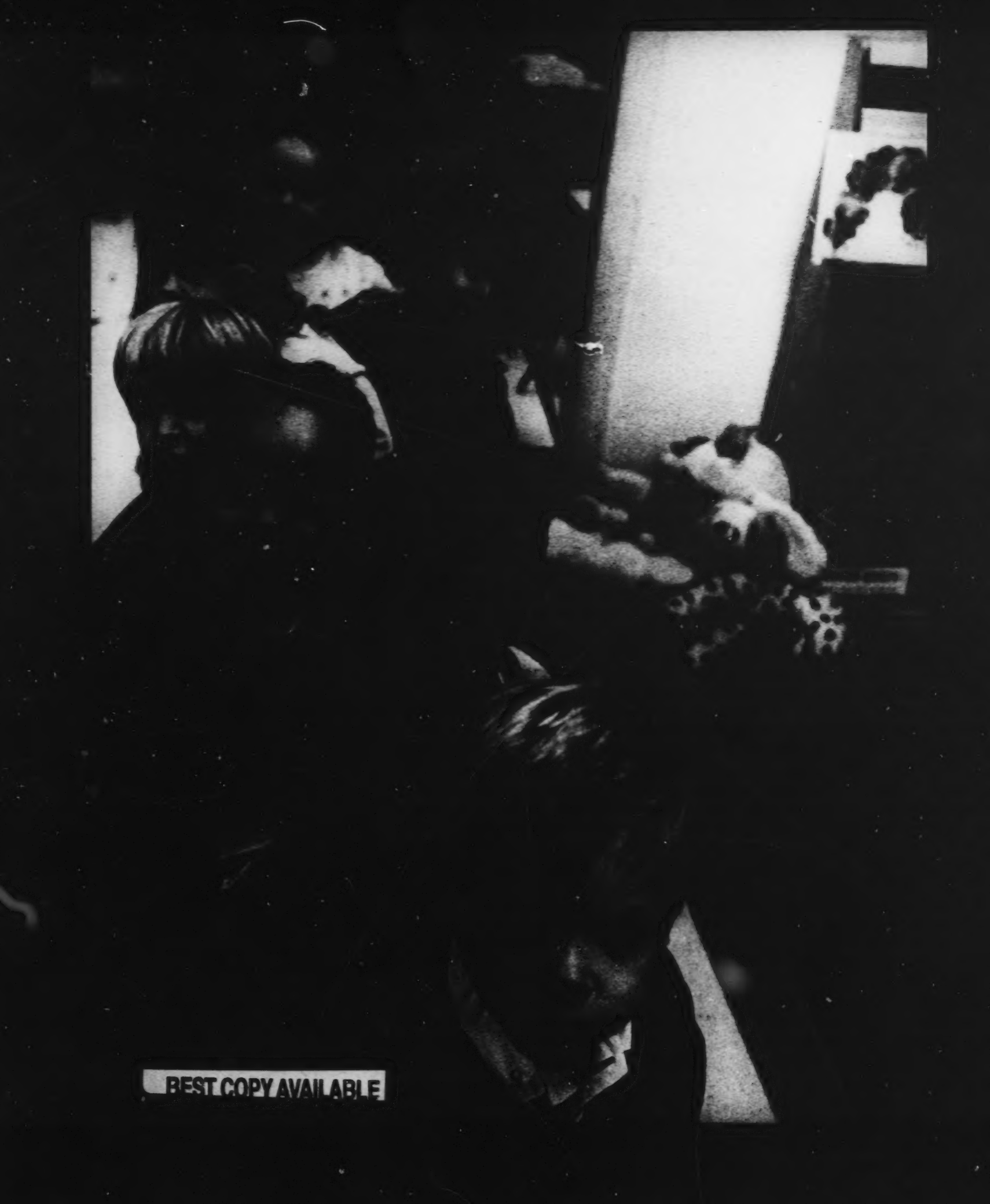
This has been an exhilarating year for the National Center for Learning Disabilities. We have taken our key messages across the country and provided services to more children, adults and their families than ever before. Our regional Summits in both Phoenix, Arizona and Dallas, Texas enabled us to reach many parents and educators with the most current information about learning disabilities and generated enormous interest from the media. Through the Summits and our National Information & Referral Service we discover what the key concerns and issues are around the country. Feeling the pulse of the nation, we are better able to advocate in Washington, D.C. for those with learning disabilities.

The main message of NCLD is that learning disabilities are a national responsibility. To emphasize this we undertook our most ambitious project to date, a National Summit on Learning Disabilities, held in Washington D.C. in September, 1994. Given that the outcomes for so many individuals with learning disabilities are still bleak, given that our scientific knowledge has improved significantly, and given that during this year we will see, hopefully, the reauthorization of key legislation affecting learning disabilities, it was critical to try to develop a constructive and collaborative discussion on future policy and practice. The National Summit reviewed the whole field of learning disabilities, and examined the gaps and needs in research, policy and practice. We have now developed an agenda for the future which we believe will enhance the treatment for learning disabilities well into the next century.

It was timely to elevate the debate to a level where key policy makers, government departments, researchers and educators reviewed the state of the field and made plans for the future. Consensus has been built around the priorities of early identification and intervention for children with learning disabilities and improved teacher preparation. The upgrading of teacher preparation will bridge the gap between research discoveries and their practical application in the classroom.

I am pleased to report that in December we were able to present the recommendations from the Summit to Secretary for Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala. She in turn has agreed to help us spearhead the next steps in the agenda. A report of the Summit outlines what must be done to improve the lives of those with learning disabilities both nationally and locally. Implementing these plans will truly be a challenge for everyone concerned, but one that is within our capabilities if we are willing to work together. Faced as we are with threatened cuts in services to many of our constituents, we must continue to emphasize that learning disabilities are a bipartisan issue and are truly a national responsibility. We will not shirk from the task of protecting the rights of the learning disabled.

I thank all of you for your continued efforts. The more we reach out, the more we see how much still needs to be done. ■



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

by William Ellis

Executive Editor of THEIR WORLD

In the years since it began as the journal/program for the organization's annual benefit, THEIR WORLD has evolved and developed a unique place for itself among the wide variety of publications available in the learning disabilities field. Much of what is written in the field comes from scholars and researchers who use their forms of reporting, which are largely inaccessible to the general public. THEIR WORLD has established a place which makes its messages directly available to the general public.

Learning disabilities are real and, while they are very worthy of serious and often abstract study, they have a real face which must respond to an often unfriendly world, or, at least, a world which does not understand. It is in this area that THEIR WORLD has made its mark. The human face of learning disabilities is clearly portrayed, and nobody records this as well as THEIR WORLD has over the years.

This year's issue is no exception and throughout the magazine the full gamut of human emotion among those with learning disabilities is well documented. Much of it testifies to the indomitability of the human spirit, and much of it demonstrates the large potential for success and useful contribution among the learning disabled. As you will see from the many personal testimony articles those contributions are mighty and varied. Our world is greatly enhanced by the efforts of these individuals as well as those who work to understand the problem and bring services to those who need them.

For some time, we have debated internally whether it is time to recognize this reality by renaming the magazine, OUR WORLD. It is a thought interesting to contemplate. Many have indicated that they prefer not to be considered as a world apart, but an integral part of the community. On the other hand, there are those who want the world to know that there is a special group of people who feel they have the right to their own sense of identity. It is an interesting discussion as to whether THEIR or OUR is the more inclusive. If you have any thoughts we would certainly be pleased to hear from you.

We hope that you will enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed working on it. As always, and especially so this year when my own health has been so poor, I am deeply grateful to my colleagues for the time and enthusiasm they have put into the production of the magazine—**David, Rose, Janet, Karen and Johnny**. They contribute so much to this endeavor and the magazine could not be produced without them. Their efforts are very much appreciated.

Additionally and finally, I am delighted to acknowledge the superb pictures of photographer and Board member, **Claire Yaffa**, which grace our pages again this year. It is not possible to express the contribution that is made by this wonderful friend and artist, to the over-all dynamic of the magazine. All we know is that, without her work, the quality we have sought to build over the years, would be greatly diminished. ■

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'HEY, DUMMY!'

A Testimony of an Overcomer

BY LONNIE CLINKSCALE

Have you ever wondered what a child with a learning disability is really thinking? How does he or she handle being made to feel different?

How about this: being in a classroom and asked to come to the chalkboard by the teacher to add 2 + 2; you are already placed in the back of the classroom, you stutter when you speak, your clothes are too big or too small, and your personal hygiene is not desirable. All eyes are on you as you walk to the chalkboard. Children snickering and whispering as you walk by. Well you finally make it. The teacher hands you the chalk.

You see 2 + 2 =? Your mind is not comprehending what's in the other children's minds, but you make an effort and try anyway. You write the number 5 and it never entered your mind that this is the wrong answer. Suddenly, one of your classmates for whom you have a school boy crush, screams out "Hey dummy, the answer is 4 not 5!" Everyone bursts out in an unforgettable laughter that will haunt you for years to come. Before you can get over that embarrassing ordeal, the teacher who has worked with you blurts out her frustration and disappointment. "Lonnie, you know the answer is not 5. The more I teach you, the dumber you get."

I HAD NO HOPE

My name is Lonnie Clinkscale, author of *Hey Dummy! A Testimony of an Overcomer.* My original purpose for writing this inspirational story was to serve only as therapy for myself. Nevertheless, I quickly learned that so many parents as well as children were experiencing the same ordeal. *Hey Dummy* was soon accepted into the various schools and organizations as a book that motivates children and adults to succeed in the midst of adversity. As a child with a learning disability, I believed that there was no hope. For me, it was common to have low self-esteem and the feeling of being locked into a mental prison because of the fear of expressing my inner feelings to my parents as well as my teachers.

I AM MY LEARNING DISABILITY

Living in a dysfunctional home accelerated this feeling of unworthiness. Constantly reminded of my inability to achieve in school like my four sisters, my home life as a child became a nightmare. But there was no one to wake me up. I was afraid to bring home my report card for the fear of what would happen. I could recall my dad looking at my report card with all F's. He would ask me "Why can't you receive A's like your sisters?" I could not respond back to him because of the fear of what might happen. My dad responded back by saying, "Boy, you are nothing but a dummy, and you will never be anything in this life." Then he took a newspaper and made a dummy hat and instructed me to sit in my little sister's highchair. Guests would come over, I would have to respond that I was a dummy. I could not understand what I had done to be treated in such a manner. Hatred began to overtake me, I hated the way I looked and the person that I was told that I was. I wanted to be loved and accepted by my parents as well as my peers.

SCHOOL WAS DIFFICULT FOR ME

School was difficult for me because I was not receiving or grasping as quick as the other children in

As a child with a learning disability, I believed that there was no hope. I had low self-esteem and felt locked into a mental prison because I feared expressing my inner feelings to my teachers and my parents.

my class. One morning, the principal informed our class that we were selected to perform the school play for Christmas entitled *Scrooge* and that everyone is expected to have a part in the play. The excitement I had went beyond anything I had ever experienced, at last I was a part of a project with my classmates. As we begin to rehearse in class, my role in the play was to roll Mr. Scrooge's coffin across the stage, which I considered the apex of the play.

After days of rehearsal, the big day finally came. I could not sleep at all that night. In the morning, after eating a bowl of oatmeal and gravy for breakfast, I went to put on the same dirty clothes that I had worn all week. I grabbed my tennis shoes only to learn that the bottom soles had come apart. I grabbed my oldest brother's tennis shoes and placed toilet tissue at the bottom of the toes to get a better fit. Running out of the house in excitement, I finally made it to class. Many of the children began to laugh at me saying "here comes Bozo the clown," while others shouted "it must be raining outside, because Lonnie has on highwaters." I did not mind those sarcastic statements because I believed that I was going to be well accepted after the play because I would do a good job.

We arrived at the packed auditorium. Finally, it came to my part in the play. Miss Jones gave me the signal as I rolled Scrooge's coffin across the stage. Suddenly I tripped over my brother's shoes which were four times larger than mine. I fell into the coffin as it shot across the stage. Everyone in the auditorium began to laugh. The most serious part of the play became the most hilarious part. Miss Jones was so furious with me, that when we got back to the class, she shouted to the class, "You did an outstanding job, but Lonnie you messed up the entire play. The word 'dummy' fits you well." I began to break down in tears because then I knew that Miss Jones was only enforcing what my dad and peers were saying.

I BECOME DEPRESSED BUT MEET MR. ROSSI

I became more reserved within myself and became very rebellious and stubborn. This resulted in the association with children who were known to be troublemakers. One day when I came home from school, I heard my mom and dad fighting in the other room. My mom left their bedroom and came into my room with tears streaming down her cheeks. She grabbed me and held me in her arms as she screamed out to my father, "That's all right, Lonnie is my son."

Two months later, my parents were divorced and I felt that I was responsible. This resulted in my taking an overdose to rid my parents of their miseries. After weeks in the hospital, and a psychiatric evaluation, it was determined that when I am released from the hospital and start back to school, that I should be placed in a special class, half day in the morning, the remainder of the day in LD. This class is entitled "Motivation to help children with reading, writing, arithmetic and motivational skills." I could recall those days when Miss Jones would say at 1:00 pm, "Lonnie, it's about that time," and the children would whisper, "He's going to that retard class."

Nevertheless, I looked forward to going because I was surrounded by students just like me. In class, my

teacher, Mr. Rossi, saw something in me that I thought never existed: potential to be a success. He took the time to teach all children in LD class confidence, not to be intimidated, and most importantly of all, he taught them self respect. Daily, he would remind his students that their minds were pearls and they can learn just about anything. He taught his students how to have patience within themselves. He began by working on our low self esteem, by reading stories of successful men and women.

Weekly, he would give us the assignment of telling the class what we would like to be when we graduate from school. Every Friday he would ask each student to stand in front of the class and say what they have done to make their dreams come true. He would tie that in by informing his students of the importance of staying in school. In order to accomplish your dream in life, you have to discipline yourself, study, complete all of your homework assignments, and most importantly, you must set time aside before watching television to study. He would test every student and if we did well, he would give us a red token. At the end of the week, those tokens could be turned in for school supplies or candy, which I enjoyed.

Dr. Rossi instilled discipline within his students and how to respect the feelings and rights of our fellow students, by role playing. This also taught students

In class, my teacher, Mr. Rossi, saw something in me that I thought never existed: potential to be a success

how to use their imaginations. Daily, he required his students to read one page from a book that was selected from his class. I could recall when I was asked to read. I was so nervous that I stated to Mr. Rossi "I can't read because I stutter." He walked over to me, placed his right hand on my shoulder, "Lonnie, in this class there is no such thing as I can't because I know that if you take your time, you can do it."

I WIN A SPEAKING CONTEST

After months in class, I had no problem in reading an entire 60-page book, because Dr. Rossi built my confidence within myself. He had so much confidence in me that he submitted my name to represent our entire school in oratorical speaking. I took first place in the city of Youngstown, Ohio. I went on to take second place in the entire district. Everyone was shocked, including my home room teacher, Miss Jones. Our school had never taken first place even though we had students who were in honors classes who were used in public speaking to represent our school. Nevertheless, you had a slow learner representing the entire district.

"IF LONNIE CAN DO IT, SO CAN YOU"

My grades went from D- to C+ to a straight A student. The principal was so amazed that he took a picture of me and placed it in the corridor of the school. He said "If Lonnie can do it, so can you." No one impacted my life like Dr. Rossi, he became my role model because he cared about every student in that class. The child who was called a dummy, with the help of special teachers from LD, reached beyond his circumstances to achieve his dream. Now that I look back at our LD classes, I consider that class to be a beacon of light, to guide young men and women into accomplishing their dreams. Just like a lighthouse, that guides a lost ship to safety. To every parent that has a child with a learning disability, it is imperative that you give your child all the support and love that they need.

One should be involved in all school activities including the PTA. Get involved in what your child is doing. Meet with his or her teachers. Make your children realize that they are special. If your child is having a problem in a particular lesson, you as a parent should learn all you can about that lesson. Parents must have patience and, most important of all, we as parents who have children with learning disabilities must never compare them to other children or say derogatory things to them. We must never put them into mental prisons which could take a lifetime to overcome. We must consider the environment that a child is living in. If a child is brought up in a hostile environment, it will be very difficult for them to learn. ■

Editor's Note: The above article is just a summary of Hey Dummy! A Testimony of an Overcomer. *Lonnie Clinkscale spends a great majority of his time traveling to various schools, organizations, and being a guest on television and radio talk shows sharing his message of hope. His inspiring book can also be purchased by calling 1-800-505-6464. Lonnie is Executive Director of Environmental Services at a large Catholic hospital in Youngstown, Ohio.*

PLEASE UNDERSTAND

A Collection of Thoughts from Adults with Learning Disabilities

BY DIANE WEST JACKSON

Please understand learning has been hard for me all my life. Now, I have decided to face my frustrations and take a new look at myself and where I am going. For the first time, I am not afraid to seek help. I know that I must face my difficulties with reading, writing and math. I accept my learning disability as a learning difference and I will try to understand myself. During this time of self reflection and discovery, I will need your help. I need to know that you will work with me to evaluate choices and support my decisions.

School days are far behind but the pain of those early attempts to learn still linger. I wish things could have been different in my younger days with education. Now I know it wasn't my fault. I knew something wasn't quite right. I looked at the book and the letters but I never saw words. Books scare me. I know I should be able to read them but I can't handle some of those words. Every time I see words I can't read, my stomach hurts with the same feeling I had each morning before school. To this day, I still feel uncomfortable in a library. How can I learn not to be afraid? Life can be pretty scary at times. Please understand.

ASSESSMENT

Often I wonder how I can have average to above average intelligence and feel so dumb! Are you sure I am smart? Maybe someone made a mistake. How do you know those questions measure what my brain does with information? Do you know how much it hurts me to say, "I don't know" when you ask a question? I know I was supposed to learn that in school but I didn't. I honestly tried my hardest but I never understood. Don't ask me another question I don't know. I have had too many questions without answers in my life. Please understand.

WATCHING OTHERS

I listen carefully to the sounds you are saying. Slowly, they blend into words and sentences with meaning. Then I have to worry that the meaning you intended was not what I heard. I smile to let you know I have listened but often, you don't know

Often I wonder how I can have average to above average intelligence and feel so dumb!...I have set a goal of figuring out my learning problem and helping others in this deep dark hole who feel the same way.

that I have not understood. Who am I fooling, you or me?

I wish I didn't worry so much about what other people think of me. I find myself not asking questions because of fear of people making remarks behind my back. I look at others and wonder if they think I am stupid—or don't care. I am trying hard to know myself and it hurts inside. Sometimes, I feel I should hide again but know it's not the answer for progress in my life. I want to be open with you for help in any way. Please understand.

MY FAMILY

Can you imagine how I feel knowing there is someone else in my family who faces the same frustration each day? I know I am not alone yet why is it never discussed? You need to help me think this through. How can I talk about this with my family and where do I begin? I guess I need to understand myself better. I am ready to open up but I must realize that sharing is not always easy. I think I will wait.

TIME ALONE

I know you like to curl up inside with a good book. I need space. I must have time alone. I love the outdoors. I live to keep busy. I am not ignoring you or my responsibilities. This time apart lets me think and sort out life. Don't take me wrong. Being alone can also be scary. Sometimes I need to just walk with you. Sometimes I need someone with me because I am afraid of my own thoughts. Please understand.

STEPPING FORWARD

Holding feelings inside after discovering the learning disability doesn't work when I need help. I believe there is a way I can learn. If I keep at it, things are bound to fall into place. All my life, a part of me has remained hidden. Now is the time to reach out. I need more knowledge; I want more knowledge. I want that piece of paper that says I have learned. I know I can't do it by myself. Do you really have the time and patience to stay and help? I don't know where to start and feeling the need to grow hurts when help is coming so slowly. I hope this makes sense to you. I am not going to give up. I have set a goal to figure out my learning problem and help others in this deep dark hole who feel the same way. I know not everybody has the same problem but I have the feeling it hurts them inside.

I believe, just a little, that I am capable of becoming a writer and could get my thoughts out to help others in life. That would give me excitement. Please understand. ■

Editor's Note: Diane West Jackson is a doctoral student at the University of Maine. This article is Diane's tribute to adults with learning disabilities.

MAKING IT THROUGH

BY JENNY HUSTON

My father argued with both Dr. Donya Harven and Dr. Lucy Lawson, refusing to believe that his first born child was learning disabled. The fight was on, my mother and I against my Victorian, autocratic father. I was not involved in the fight, except in as much as trying to learn to read and write.

For a year and a half in public schools I was first separated from the other children at a table at the front of the classroom with two other children who, to me, were obviously even more different than I. Often I was called upon to read aloud and/or write on the blackboard; of course I could do neither. It was 1965, and the knowledge of learning disabilities was primitive.

The following January I started at a private school across the bay from San Francisco. My troubles continued but at least I was in special classes and had a tutor at school and two days a week after school. My father had refused to pay for the private school, so my mother sold a piece of her property to pay for school and tutoring against his explicit orders.

My mother knew something was terribly wrong and called upon a friend at the University of California at San Francisco to help. She was very uncomfortable doing so but all other options had been exhausted.

We spent five days at the UCSF Child Study Unit, and I was given every test under the sun. Years later when my mother and I were discussing that week at UCSF she told me that the hardest thing for her to do was to watch a film of me trying to read. At first I would try to read and once I knew I could not satisfactorily complete the task in front of me I would become a coy little girl. I was nothing like the child confronting her on film.

I continued in special classes, but at least everyone knew what the problem was. Although my IQ was higher than most [children] my age I was about one-third visually impaired. Dyslexia was now a common word in the vocabu-

My mother was continuously told that I would never learn to read or write. Thank God she never believed it; we fought on.

lary around me. Everyone knew I had a "problem." My friends gave me scrabble games for my birthday and I was taunted at school with "stupid" and "retard." Forced to cower under desks I soon learned to retaliate. Being two years older (I had been held back in first and second grades) I could at least physically repay the honor. My mother, at this point a single parent, was continuously told that I would never learn to read or write. Thank God she never believed it; we fought on.

Things continued in in a more rebellious manner until high school. Drug use of course became a common part of my life at 12 or so; it fed into my "tuff" image.

After 10 years of tutoring and special ed classes I finally made it to high school—what a relief. My second year in high school I discovered that even if I could not spell I could get good grades. I wanted out so I doubled up on my classes and was able to get out of high school at 18 rather than 20 with a C+ average.

College was a different story all together. My family was having severe problems; my mother was drinking heavily and I could not depend on any solid emotional support from that front. I chose a community college south of San Francisco and moved down the coast. It was beautiful but I had no idea what I was doing. My life completely fell apart that year. I moved back to SF after I finished my finals and prepared to start at the California Culinary Academy in the fall.

Trade school was a viable alternative. My spelling and reading skills would come under very little scrutiny and I would be graded for my skills and knowledge in an arena where dyslexia made very little difference. Sexism of course was evident everywhere; in 1978 there were very few women in hotel and restaurant kitchens. My mother got sober that fall.

Now after 15 years in the food business and opening a catering company six years ago, I am back in school to study nutrition. College and University (my goal is UC-Berkeley) will definitely be a long, hard haul but with help from Disabled Students Programs and Services I hope I can make it through this time, the difference being that I want to be there and there are services for me now.

In 1988 Dr. John Sikorski [member of NCLD's Professional Advisory Board] asked me to write an article for THEIR WORLD. At the time I didn't think I could write an article. With my interest in nutrition and competitive sports (I am now in my fourth year of rowing competitively), I recently completed a nutritional guide for my teammates and discovered in the interim that I am capable of writing. So here it is, six years later. ■

Editor's Note: In addition to being a 3/4 time student, Jenny Huston runs her own catering company and lectures at a local cooking college.

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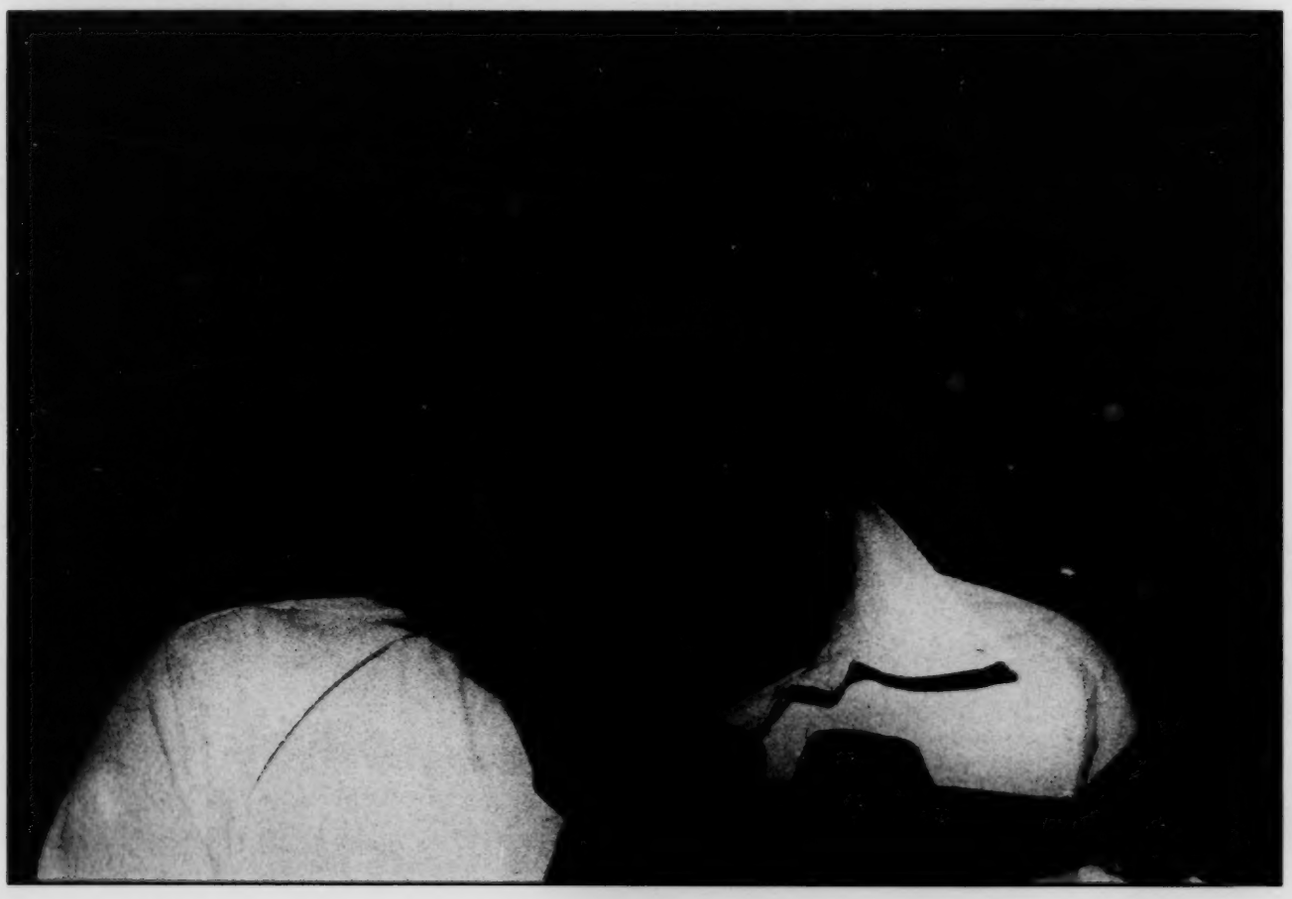
I AM MY LEARNING DISABILITY

I am Learning Disability. We are One. We are Inseparable.

BY TRUDY WINSTEAD

I am the feeling of being unable to remember. I am the frustration of not being able to retrieve information recently mastered. I am the confusion of not understanding what I read the first four times through. I am the realization that everything takes me longer and is so much harder. I am the knowledge that very little sticks with me the first, or even the second, time around. I am the fear that someone will find out. I am the wonder of realizing that other people don't see things the way I do. I am the product of being held academic hostage for years in an educational environment foreign to me. I am all of these things that can never be separated from one another.

I am a sophisticated, tangled, colorful ball of yarn. Some days, I am yellow for sunshine or red for vibrance. Some days, I am pale pink for contentment or fuschia for excitement. I am green for growth. I



Without my learning disability, I would be half of what I am now. Without my learning disability, I would be weaker, I would be less tolerant, less empathetic, less patient and kind.

am also violet for serenity or orange for glee. Occasionally, I am navy for sadness or drab olive for exhaustion. And very infrequently, I am gray for melancholy. Most days however, I am all of these colors at once—wound strand on top of strand, reaching and stretching, layer upon layer, building a complex plethora of tints, shades, and hues. Each thread is wrapped tightly around the small silent core deep within which is, in fact, my learning disability. This core is central to the way I feel and how I react. It is at the heart of all I see and do. It dictates what direction I take. It continues to shape and mold me. It is the blended rainbow of who I am.

I AM my learning disability. Buried deep within, there exists a frustration and yes, even a sadness, that others cannot ever understand. But there is also a resilience, a buoyancy, a wisdom and sensitivity born from pain that others cannot ever have. In addition, there is a compassion for and tolerance of others—a patience and calmness that comes from knowing that all things will improve if nurtured gently and skillfully. These qualities are solely mine. They are gifts to me from my past.

Without my learning disability, I would be weaker. I would be less tolerant, less empathetic, less patient and kind. I would be less joyful—for the lows intensify the highs. Because of my learning disability, I have learned to laugh. I have learned to wait. I have learned to take risks. I have learned to persevere. I have learned to take a different path to a chosen goal. I have learned to stretch myself in many directions at once. I have learned to live minute by minute and to find joy and wonder and goodness in almost everything.

Day by day by day, my learning disability goes where I go and does what I do. We are never apart. We are comfortable and at peace with each other. Therefore, I am constantly surprised when feelings which have been buried deep within surface when I least expect them. They don't care who I'm with, where I am, or what I'm doing. They demand to be dealt with. In reality, they are often echoes and shadows from my past voices and images of teachers, parents, friends. I have learned that what the voices say I am is not necessarily who I am at all. I have learned that on the outside, I may seem like everyone else; but on the inside, I am set apart. I am not only unique, I am also very different. I have grown, through necessity, into a much stronger person. Without my learning disability, I would be half of who I am now. I AM my learning disability. We are one. We are inseparable. And, finally, we are friends. ■

Editor's Note: Trudy Winstead is the Upper School Learning Disabilities Specialist at the Forsyth Country Day School, in Lewisville, North Carolina.

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LEARNING DISABILITY AND THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

BY CAROLYN EGGLESTON, Ph.D.

LEARNING DISABILITY AND DELINQUENCY 2

Characteristics associated with learning disabilities create problems for a student in school, home, and work. Students with learning disabilities are often alienated, isolated and misunderstood, which can lead to difficulty in personal relationships and life goal attainment. For the student with learning disabilities who comes in contact with the justice system, these characteristics could be life-threatening. Misinterpreting a social situation could get a person killed. And yet, many times the adjudication process does not even include information about a person's learning disability. Many Americans consider the fact that a person is learning disabled irrelevant once a crime has been committed. The United States no longer has the luxury of establishing a system of "us" against "them"; we must consider all students as part of the society. We are truly all "us."

Although we still do not know the exact numbers of learning disabled persons in the justice system, we do know that there is an over-representation of special education eligible students in corrections. The most accurate estimates suggest that at least 42% of the corrections population is eligible for special education. A large proportion of these have learning disabilities. Most states have made strides in providing special education in juvenile systems, but much needs to be done in adult systems.

There have been a number of theories proposed about the link between learning disabilities and juvenile delinquency. The assumption has been that students with learning disabilities are somehow more likely to become juvenile delinquents, particularly because males are over-represented in both groups. There are several theories that suggest at least a link between the two.

LINKS BETWEEN LEARNING DISABILITIES AND JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

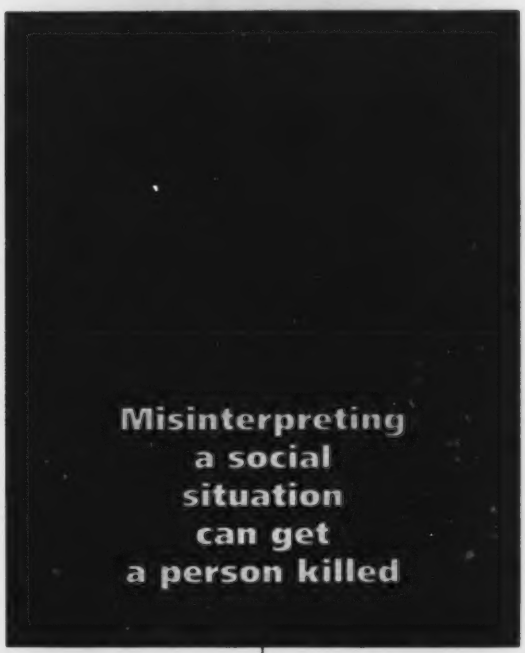
The first theory about this link is called the "susceptibility theory." This theory holds that the learning disabled person's very characteristics make him more susceptible to committing crime. These would include impulsivity, suggestibility, and poor social perception skills, which may be present with both learning disabled students and juvenile delinquents.

The second theory, the "school failure theory," suggests that a person with learning disabilities, who has failed and been failed by school, may go looking for acceptance in another arena. Perhaps the most poignant example of this would be a student who desecrates a school. That statement against the school speaks of rage and disappointment.

A third theory proposes that "differential treatment" exists, in which a person with learning disabilities is treated differently once coming in contact with the justice system. The characteristics of a person with learning disabilities may mean an inappropriate response to the officers' questions. We know that persons with learning disabilities are more likely to penetrate further into the justice system and to stay longer than nondisabled peers.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN PRISON

Whatever the link or cause, we know that learning disabled persons can be found in both juvenile and adult corrections systems. State corrections sys-



tems have been making great strides in providing educational programming for students with learning disabilities, but there are some inherent problems that continue to exist. Current legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may require some special interpretation for corrections. The IDEA, especially, focuses on special education needs of public school children. Some articulation should be done to make for a better "fit." Cooperative agreements between state departments of education and correctional education agencies have been developed in a number of states, and these are the most successful in working through problems. Unfortunately, litigation remains one major means of implementation.

STRUGGLING TO MEET NEW STANDARDS

Most juvenile corrections agencies have some special education available but problems continue. Programs have been developed to meet the guidelines of Public Law 94-142, and are being adapted to meet IDEA requirements. Several states have established particularly interesting implementation plans, among them Virginia, Maryland, Connecticut, and Minnesota. Problems remain in implementing the ADA, particularly in adult facilities, as programs for the learning disabled are lacking in most adult systems.

Implementation difficulties with both pieces of legislation range from first court contact to transition back to the community. Perhaps the over arching issue is that the agencies which adjudicate and contain are not educational entities. Their purpose is determination of guilt or innocence, security and custody.

Some areas of the relevant legislation are particularly difficult to implement in the justice system. One problem occurs with confidentiality and the transfer of records. Although Public Law 94-142 was designed to correct inappropriate access and increase contact by parents, the result for corrections has been that records arrive from public schools much too late to be of use, if they arrive at all. Often special education records are not available at adjudication. The confidentiality and transfer requirements of corrections agencies interact with special education requirements to the point that sometimes teachers in the facility never see the educational records.

TESTING AND PERSONNEL

Testing and evaluation for learning disabilities present particular problems in the justice system. The movement through the adjudication and reception process can be very rapid. At the court point guilt or innocence is under scrutiny, not the presence of a disability. Once assigned to corrections, the evaluation and diagnostic process may be measured in days, not weeks. A ward or inmate may be moved to a number of different facilities during this process, with not enough time at any to address real concerns. As a result, timelines often go by unmet and the student does not have access to appropriate programming.

A special difficulty exists in providing qualified personnel, from security staff, to evaluators, to school

teachers. Security staff are not always aware or trained in the requirements of ADA and IDEA. Specialized, ongoing training needs to be developed for personnel from the court service worker to the correctional officer on the block. There has not been a commitment on the part of most court and corrections systems to provide this training.

Educators in the school programs, although trained to teach, may not be endorsed special educators. Even if they hold endorsement in special education, there are few training programs which focus on the needs of adjudicated students. It is extremely difficult to obtain and keep good, qualified educators. In some cases the number of students with learning disabilities is so low within a particular institution that an endorsed teacher may have to travel between facilities or an inmate student may be placed in the one facility that has endorsed teachers. This then conflicts with "the least restrictive environment" requirements. More efforts must be made to train correctional educators about students with learning disabilities.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF MINORITIES

We know that there is a significant over-representation of minority persons in custody and in special education. Special problems exist when considering limited English proficient inmates with learning disabilities. Corrections systems are struggling to provide the most basic services in a second language. Testing, evaluation and instruction may be handled solely in English. In those cases when agencies are able to provide these services in languages other than English, they most commonly provide them in Spanish. The many other languages represented in the institution may never be addressed properly for the disabled student.

The least restrictive environment has presented problems for incarcerated settings. Most states have interpreted the requirement to mean that disabled students in the institution must be housed and managed in a way that is not more restrictive than that of their

peers in the institution. Although this has worked for most students with learning disabilities, problems continue in segregated units or during disciplinary actions.

Persons with learning disabilities are more likely to penetrate further into the justice system and to stay longer than nondisabled peers

INVOLVING PARENTS

Parental involvement has continued to be a major problem in some states. Although disabled students in custody are wards of the state, the parent retains residual rights unless these have been legally terminated. The natural parent is therefore the appropriate person for contact with the special education process. In many cases, however, the parent cannot be found. Greater strides must be made by some states to increase attempts to involve parents. Where parental rights have been terminated, surrogate parent procedures must be developed. This creates difficulty for the corrections systems, which have not traditionally accepted the idea of outsiders judging activities inside the institution.

Transition from the community—and back to the community—is required for students with learning disabilities. Although state systems often offer fairly good programs within the structured environment of the institution, there is usually a significant breakdown at both transfer points. Very little is done to appropriately transition a student into corrections from the community. Attempts are being made to provide transition upon release from the facility, but this has been slow. Some states have legal prohibitions against contact with the ward or inmate once s/he has left state care. This makes transition impossible and must be changed.

Wards with learning disabilities have significant problems in the institutional setting, but some attention has been given to them. This cannot be said of the inmate of an adult correctional system who has learning disabilities, in spite of the fact that the IDEA legislation is appropriate for students under 22, and there are many inmates in adult corrections under this age. ADA applies to all inmates of correctional facilities, whether juvenile or adult. Yet there is much less awareness of the needs of the learning disabled offender in adult corrections. Indeed, the focus has been on taking things away from them not providing extras.

Strides have been made in providing appropriate programs for learning disabled persons in contact with the justice system. Much more remains to be done. ■

Editor's Note: Dr. Eggleston is the Director of the Center for the Study of Correctional Education at California State University in San Bernardino. She is also an Assistant Professor of Special Education at California State University.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

VICTIM OF THE SYSTEM

BY PHILIP PURPURA

There is a need to bring to everyone's attention some of the many gaps in meeting the needs of disabled children, young adults and adults, and especially my son, who is learning disabled and presently incarcerated.

Our son was diagnosed as learning disabled a few years after he was born in 1972. Since then, my wife and I have gone through a lifetime of adjustments, not only dealing with our son's disability, but with the systems dealing with learning disabled people, and also dealing with the school systems and the facilities that did not work for our son.

In our son's early school years, pre-K through grade four, we had to fight with the Committee of the Handicapped to have him placed in another school district which had a learning disabilities program. Our district had only a resource room. A resource room is where a child gets pulled out of a classroom and put into a room on a one-to-one basis with a teacher for 45 minutes. This happened about two to three times a week.

Our son missed a lot of interaction with other children and also put up with a lot of other things. When you're taken out of a class, other kids run after you, you are singled out, you are made fun of. Everyone who was in the resource room came to that conclusion.

HOPE FROM A PROMISING PROGRAM

In the fifth grade, he was placed in one of the better districts which had a terrific LD program. He had a teacher who had a degree in special education, and had been teaching for ten years. About two or three months into the school year, the teacher decided our son was not learning disabled, but had a behavior problem. Even with all his school records, copies of tests that came from the Long Island Jewish Hospital—(our son went to the Long Island Jewish Hospital for about two years at our own expense; just about everything was at our own expense)—the teacher decided she would have a teacher's aide stay with him and occupy his time, instead of helping him.

He did not do school work and was separated from other children. She was not able to handle him, and decided that because he was an out of district child, he would not be there next year, and so the story continues.

THE SHOCK OF NO CONFIDENTIALITY

Our son came back into our school district in junior high. There were many problems. He was on medication. The medication made him very subdued. The bullies of the school would chase him. One day he was in the school psychologist's office, and he was told to wait while the psychiatrist was finishing with the previous student. The two secretaries outside were discussing in detail the LD child who was already in the office. That child had been told by the psychiatrist that everything would be kept very confidential. Our son was very upset, overhearing the two secretaries talking about the LD child in the other room. No confidentiality was exercised here.

From that day forward, he never trusted anyone in the school administration, and he had no one to talk to but his parents. We came across special education teachers who really cared for children, but did not have the support they needed, such as teachers' aides. This would have enabled the teachers to spend

< Photo of an anonymous prisoner.

more time individually with each child.

Then there were teachers who were in special education. They did what they had to do. In our son's case, it was nothing. We even sent our son to a special school in Maine. He was humiliated up there. He ran away from that school and came back.

TURNING TOWARD CRIME

Today, many parents either have a life struggle to maintain their child's independence in life's journeys, or they try, or they just give up due to lack of coherence or money. Our son is now 22 years old, and we are still supporting him in his efforts to survive. In 1991, at the age of 19, he was in a car accident in which he fractured both of his wrists. After three operations, his left wrist never healed. As a consequence of dealing with the operations and recuperation, and dealing with the frustrations of not being able to work, he was very depressed and became involved with the wrong people. After many incidents, I caught him forging one of my checks for $500, and my wife and I felt that we had no choice but to ask him to leave the house.

A month later when there was no one at home, he broke into the house and stole televisions, a video recorder and jewelry. In another incident, he forged $1800 worth of checks. On another occasion, he took a business note that came in for $2500, and there were several other incidents as well. We kept on having him arrested for these things, even though it bothered us.

The system took six months before he came before a judge. Then he received a strong warning and five years probation. His probation officer, who was very nasty and uncooperative, did not want to recognize his LD/ADD problem, and did not care who he was or what he was. Without any effort from the probation officer, our son continued to hang around with the wrong people, got involved in stealing cars and dealing with drugs on a low-key level. He was finally arrested, and given two and a half to five years in state prison. We wrote many letters. We have met many times with the judge, the District Attorney, the Legal Aid attorney, indicating to them that our son has learning disabilities and has special needs. We presented to them a report on the New York State correctional facilities, showing the lack of facilities for people with special needs. When the facility for people with special needs is over crowded, the inmate is then transferred to another facility. For his offense, he would have received eight to 12 years in prison, but through our efforts, we got him down to two and a half to five years, which was the minimum.

MORE PUNISHMENT, MORE PROBLEMS

While he was in the Riverhead County facility for three weeks, he was jumped by four or five inmates who gave him a concussion, broke his nose and cracked his wrist, making it worse than it was before. The system then dragged its heels, and after three months of being in pain, he was taken to a doctor for his nose. They told him he didn't have a broken nose, he had a deviated septum. After three months, I guess the nose does heal and you are left with a deviated septum.

The wrist was also evaluated at that time, and it was determined that no operation was necessary, even though it was a fracture. After our mass efforts, we had him re-evaluated and he was approved for the wrist operation on May 17, 1994. But he never had

a chance to have the operation because three days later, on May 20, they shipped him into the "shock program."

THE WRONG SHOCK, THE RIGHT PROGRAM

The shock program is similar to a military-based boot camp where if you last six months in the camp, they will let you out on work release. Individuals entering the shock program need to be in top physical condition without a broken nose or wrist. Our son was there for one week, until someone realized, when they read his medical report, that he was not eligible for this program. He was then shipped to a facility near Watertown, New York, where he is now participating in an ASAP and KSAP program. The ASAP program is a 12-step program, and the KSAP program is a program to create an understanding of why he got involved with drugs. But there is no guarantee how long he will be there, considering his wrist is still fractured, and no one wants to deal with it.

The bottom line is that we wanted our son to know how wrong he was, committing these injustices to his family and to society. But we also have learned from our experience that there is very little sensitivity to the needs of LD people in the county and state facilities. They do not have the time, the manpower, the knowledge of special needs, the funds to help these people. We also found through our experience that there is so much time and money wasted within these systems.

Many teachers, guards, counselors and medical supervisors who my wife spoke with many times, either visiting or by telephone, are just doing their job, going with the flow, which is really sad. I believe there are a lot of people with special needs who have fallen through the cracks. It just seems that when it comes to the important moral issues, our society tends to want only to deal with cutting the weeds, not pulling them from the roots.

It just seems that when it comes to the important moral issues, our society tends to want only to deal with cutting the weeds, not pulling them from the roots

There are many LD children out there who are victims of the system. But I do believe that if we can find the means to develop and structure a national program from the school system up and beyond the prison system, then we will not only help the people with special needs, but also society itself. ■

Editor's Note: Philip Purpura is a Certified Financial Planner in the state of New York. He first contacted NCLD to seek advice and has since spoken on our behalf in Washington, D.C.

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VOICES THROUGH THE BEDROOM WALL

BY NOREEN BOYLE

THE EXPERIENCE OF SIBLINGS 3

Again tonight I hear my brother's voice carrying out a conversation—sometimes playing the part of two people, at other times, just one.

When we were younger—the same setting—he in his bedroom and me in mine—I would hear him through my bedroom wall and would yell out, "Who's in there with you?" And he would stop his talking and yell back, "Nobody."

"Then stop talking to yourself." For a few minutes there would be quiet. But gradually and inexorably, I'd hear his voice again, at first muffled by his pillow, but as his conversation would grow more intense, the volume would slowly increase.

Eventually, I began to realize that this was his way of getting through his days and gathering up the courage to face tomorrow. He was rewriting a script in which he didn't like the way his character was portrayed. This way his character could fight back against the bully, charm the heroine or score the winning run.

And every night I'd listen to him rewriting and then rehearsing the revised script. But on the following day, never did he win the battle, the girl or the game. Too many in the cast of his daytime play were ignorant and insensitive actors. But for a few minutes in his darkened bedroom, he held the spotlight and had his chance to shine.

Again tonight I hear his voice through the walls. But tonight I don't interrupt—I let him change the ending of his daily nightmare if only for a few minutes so that he can face the sun the following morning. ■

Editor's Note: Noreen Boyle is a registered nurse. This piece was written when she was leaving high school and he was just entering.

Best wishes to the National Center for Learning Disabilities

DDS Donovan Data Systems Inc

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A DEGREE OF DIFFERENCE

A Sibling's Viewpoint about Growing Up Dyslexic

BY DAVID WENGROD

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in Perspectives, *the newsletter for The Orton Dyslexia Society in the Winter 1994 Edition Volume 20 No. 1. It is reprinted with the kind permission of The Orton Dyslexia Society.*

I knew Robert had a learning problem when we were kids. It wasn't something that he talked about. Instead, it was something he kept bottled up, something that I would imagine was a major source of frustration for him.

Robert was the third of three children in our family. Both my sister Debra, who was a hard-studying "straight A" student, and myself, who winged it through school, were considered bright children. Robert had to follow in our footsteps. By attending the same public elementary school, he had come in contact with some of the same teachers Debra and I had years earlier.

I remember my parents were very upset one day. They had searched out the opinion of a highly regarded child psychiatrist. He explained that the problem did not lie with Robert. My parents were lucky to have two highly intelligent children and now would have to accept this. In fact, so many of the so-called experts didn't know what they were talking about. For example, Robert's third grade teacher, who had published about reading skills, failed to raise Robert's grade point average the year he attended her class. What was happening was the New York City school system was failing in its ability to teach special students. As time went on Robert was slipping, being pushed further down the assembly line.

GET ROBERT OUT OF THIS CLASS!

It is to my parents' credit that they didn't sit still and accept the advice from "experts." By the fifth grade Robert was delegated to the slow class, the one which was filled with all the behavior problems. One day during a field trip a teacher who was also a friend of the family told my mother what my parents already knew—"Get Robert out of this class!"

Robert rarely talked about his problem, never complained, never communicated to anyone about his inability to learn how to read.In fact, he rarely spoke at all. Yes, Robert had a circle of friends, but as a child he was always shy and low-key. He was drowning in the school system and it was almost certain that he could withdraw further into himself.

A tutor was brought in to help Robert get out of that slow class. He was fed answers to get him into an average level sixth grade class. He passed the New York State Special Student examination. But they didn't tackle Robert's true problem. Remedial reading classes at both Brooklyn College and New York University hadn't helped either. Robert still didn't know how to read!

Luckily, advances occurred. An eye examination revealed that Robert had a problem with double vision. Eye exercises helped strengthen the muscles in his eyes, but not his reading. My parents continued to pursue professional advice. This search finally uncovered the right psychiatrist, a young intern at Brooklyn's King County Hospital, who, after six months of unproductive sessions, arranged for a battery of tests to determine if any learning disabilities existed. The results indicated that Robert had an auditory processing disorder—a lack of coordination between sight and sound commonly known as dyslexia.

Robert could have easily retreated into a shell at an early age, become reclusive or basically just gotten by. He chose instead to confront his problems and now specializes in them.

CONFRONTING THE READING DISORDER

And so a new battle began. Robert had to confront his reading disorder. For Junior High School Robert moved to a private school whose less structured environment would be more comfortable. It was discovered that structure was what was needed in Robert's education. For seventh grade Robert moved to a Manhattan-based private school that served his educational and social needs. To some extent he tackled his deficiencies. He discovered that some friends and fellow classmates shared similar problems. Soon, his psychiatrist decided that it was time for Robert to move on, on his own.

All along, my parents kept Robert involved in various hobbies. He enjoyed gardening, cooking, and most important, photography. It's ironic that someone with his problems had such a skilled eye. This led to his first career. Robert tried college but, failed his first semester courses. He turned to biomedical photography and was accepted to a fellowship program at a leading hospital in Miami, Florida. This job eventually led to a job with the parent company of The Miami Herald, Knight Ridder Broadcast.

A major turn in Robert's life came at age 25 when he first openly acknowledged that he had dyslexia. He told our parents of his need to return to college. He moved into their home, now in Albuquerque, New Mexico and enrolled at The University of New Mexico. Robert knew that his college years would be a challenge, but being older and wiser he approached academia differently. He worked with a reader, had his texts transferred to audio tape, took exams orally and frequently in a private room with a proctor without any time restraints, met with professors, attended study sessions, purchased a computer with spell and grammar checkers, and got involved with support and advocacy groups for learning disabled students on campus. He decided to major in education. He struggled with college, but persevered.

Today, Robert teaches individuals with specific language learning disabilities at the elementary school level. He recently completed his Master's degree in special education with an emphasis in learning disabilities. Robert has been accepted into a Ph.D. program. He is the past president of The Orton Dyslexia Society Southwest Branch and is on the Board of Directors of The New Mexico Coalition for Literacy. You might have seen him on television, heard him on radio or at workshops, or read about him in the newspaper. Robert has become an advocate for individuals with dyslexia. Robert could have easily retreated into a shell at an early age, become reclusive or basically just gotten by. He chose instead to confront his problems and now specializes in them. He brings a unique perspective to his work because he can empathize with his students. I can point to him with pride, not just because he's my brother, but because the path he has chosen is a sense of conviction and character. He is a true success story! ■

FROM HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY J. ROBERT COX

THE LD EXPERIENCE 4

My first opportunity for motion picture and television came when I auditioned for the Ted Mack Amateur Hour, performing my fancy gun western twirling act. The makeup artist for the show had a booking agency in Dallas and asked if I would like to list with her agency. I did, and a few weeks later she called and asked if I wanted to audition for a national television commercial. The product was for a 5-Day Deodorant. I jumped at the chance and got a part.

A month later I had another audition for a World War II motion picture starring John Agar and Dick Webb. This was a dream come true. As I was driving to the audition I was so excited, I was sure they would like me, that I would get a good part and do well, and when the movie was released I just knew John Wayne would see it and want me to star with him in his next movie. When I walked into the audition room there were several people sitting behind a table. They smiled and said, "Hi," and I smiled and said, "Hi," back. One of them handed me several sheets of paper with typed words all over them. I thought to myself, "What is this for?" Then the man said, "Read the part for soldier four." All of a sudden a numbing, vibrating feeling started coming over my whole body because I knew I could not read it. I tried, it was a disaster! I got no part, I was so embarrassed. I knew I had to learn how to read or I would never achieve my dreams. They called me a week later and offered me a part as an extra, a person who had no speaking part and would be seen for only a brief second.

I DIED GOOD!

When I showed up on the set of the war movie, the director told me to go to Wardrobe and put on a German soldier's uniform. I did. In the very first scene I was running down a hill when I was shot by Dick Webb. The helmet I was wearing did not have a liner, making it too big, and, having no support on my ankles, I stepped on a

I knew I had to learn how to read or I would never achieve my dreams

bottle in the grass I couldn't see and fell just as I was shot. As I fell, the helmet busted my nose. They told me I nearly ran the bayonet on the end of the gun through a cameraman who I was charging. The director came over and told me I sure did die good.

He didn't know I had just stepped on a bottle and fell. He wanted me to go back to Wardrobe and change into an American soldier's uniform, I did. When I came back to the next scene they shot and killed me again. The director told me again how well I died. I said to myself, "Sure, great, I can die so well, but I can't read." It looked like John Wayne was going to have to wait a little longer for me. After all, I didn't mind starting at the bottom. The Director wanted me to go back to Wardrobe and change into a German officer's uniform with medals decorating my chest that he had probably received from Hitler. I thought, "This is it, surely an officer will have some lines to say and I would be upgraded to a principal and get paid more money." I went back out to the set expecting big things, and by golly they killed me again! As I lay there with my face in the dirt I thought, "Is this all I'm good for, just to die because I can't read? I'll never be able to pursue my dreams, I must learn to read."

DON'T GIVE UP. YOU CAN DO IT.

At this time I enrolled in an acting class. After a couple of classes the instructor told me that I needed to learn how to read so I could handle the scripts if I wanted to be an actor, but he did not know where to send me and I did not know where to turn for help.

I returned to my work as a truck driver for a freight line. In this work, I hid my lack of reading skills, using "street smarts" to survive, and kept my job for 33 years. I compensated for my inability to read delivery slips by showing them to passersby, asking for directions, which elicited verbal responses telling me my destination.

Later on I sought help again at the urging of my wife, who did not know my "secret" until after we were married. After seeking assistance through community colleges, with private teachers and libraries, I realized what I needed. Through the Texas Rehabilitation Center I attended a private learning center. After many years of persistence, the key to my learning to read proved to be in phonics, where I learned how to sound letters out and how to break words down into letter sounds.

At the age of 50 I read my first book. Quite often I speak at conferences and private schools to let other people know the struggles I have had...the message being, "Don't give up, you can do it." ■

Editor's Note: J. Robert Cox lives and works in Dallas where he is a frequent speaker, particularly in schools, sharing his varied and interesting experiences as a dyslexic.

SELF-ESTEEM LESS THAN ZERO

Portrait of an LD Youth

BY NICKI ARNOLD

Miserable all my life," "a school failure," "I wished I could drop off the face of the earth," "just plain dumb," "always in trouble," "held back a grade," "teachers didn't know what to do with me," "a downward academic spiral," and "self-esteem, less than zero," are but a few of the phrases learning disabled individuals have used to describe themselves.

Surprisingly, some of these individuals have broken the cycle of repeated academic failure and emerged as "survivors" of a system which grossly failed to meet their educational needs. Unfortunately, the reality is that there are many more who do not survive, but simply fall through the cracks. The disproportionate number of LD individuals in low paying jobs, (or unemployed) and in our prisons confirm the large number of LD casualties within the system.

SELF ESTEEM

Self esteem, self concept, or self image, and its role in the developmental cycle has been defined and discussed by many psychologists, including, Freud, Adler, Maslow, Erikson and Coopersmith. Central to most theories is how an individual feels about himself and how he measures up to his own and other people's expectations of himself.

Erik Erikson (unlike Freud) viewed the growing individual within a larger framework than family interaction. Most psychologists agree that parental acceptance is the foundation for an individual's development of self esteem. It is the succeeding stages, in the school setting, which provides an initial proving ground for an individual to measure himself against others. Erikson characterizes these school years by "I am what I learn." The young child is particularly vulnerable to developing poor self esteem when defects in his learning ability emerge. According to Coopersmith, sometime prior to middle childhood, one arrives at this general appraisal of his worth (self esteem). Barring crises, this appraisal remains relatively stable for a number of years. Changes in this general appraisal are more difficult after this period.

Self esteem in the learning disabled child may suffer in numerous ways. Undiagnosed LD can affect the early parent-child interaction. The parent may be unable to understand why the child doesn't respond "normally" to certain things. However, the most critical stage for the LD child is his school years (Erikson's fourth stage of industry vs. inferiority). This is the stage at which most children develop literacy competence. The LD child, who is often in an educational system that is unable to teach him, cannot develop literary competence, and therefore sees himself as inferior. Regardless of how others see him, he cannot accept himself as a fully worthwhile person unless, or until, he obtains a functional mastery over verbal and math skills. There is no substitute for a genuine competence; this is the only real solution to his problem.

What does it do to a person's self esteem to experience continual failure, repeated criticism, undeserved punishment and massive doses of negative feedback? Unfortunately, we are well aware of this downward academic spiral which often leads to increased dropout rates, substance abuse, promiscuity or adjudication.

TONY

Tony, a fictitious name, is from a wealthy family who epitomized a perfect "All American Family". His father, a successful businessman, and mother, an attractive homemaker, were both very involved in their childrens' lives, their church and in community affairs. Tony had both older and younger siblings whose popu-

The young child is particularly vulnerable to developing poor self-esteem when defects in his learning ability emerge

larity and academic success added to this "Norman Rockwell" picture. Even as a preschool child Tony was "different." Upon his entering school this perfect family picture began to crack. Academically Tony was a disaster. He couldn't or wouldn't read, acted up in class, was held back in third grade and chose friends "who were just like me". At one point, his desperate parents took him to a specialist in another state who diagnosed him as dyslexic.

Unfortunately his educational system was unable to meet the educational needs of a dyslexic. At age sixteen, against his parents wishes, Tony dropped out of school, further shattering his family's image. Tony proudly recounts his lone academic success, winning a school essay contest. He attributed this to a teacher who "liked" him. She took the time to explain exactly what writing the essay entailed. Tony then painstakingly read the *World Book Encyclopedia* paragraph by paragraph and laboriously wrote his essay. Reactions to his winning were mixed. Tony said, "I cherished winning that thing, but my "cool friends" made fun of me. Some people thought I cheated and a girl who felt that she should have won called me a knucklehead." His mom proudly had the award framed.

Tony's dropping out of school was the beginning of a sadly predictable pattern characterized by low paying jobs, lack of money, substance abuse, and eventually prison. Something happened to thirty year old Tony while he was in prison—he learned to read. Upon having paid his "debt to society" and being released from prison, Tony continued his education. Now in his mid-thirties, he holds a responsible, professional job and is happily married. When asked if he could change one thing in his life, he replied "The pain I caused my family."

SURVIVAL

Tony is now a prime example of someone who has achieved literacy competence. He now sees himself, and quite accurately so, as a competent, effective self-directed individual. Prior to learning to read, Tony was a prime example of an individual who suffered from "self esteem less than zero." This was caused by his inability to achieve a major developmental task (reading) which is necessary to succeed in our society. Tony "survived" in spite of the inability of our educational system to meet his needs.

Fortunately our knowledge in the field of learning disabilities has made a great deal of progress in the past thirty years. Researchers today can predict, with reasonable accuracy, which preschool children will have difficulty learning to read. Once we are able to close this tremendous gap between what researchers know and how we actually teach LD individuals, the "Tonys" of the world will not be subjected to this vicious cycle of repeated academic failure culminating in "self esteem less than zero." One can't help but speculate how different the first thirty years of Tony's and his family's lives could have been, if our educational system had been capable of teaching him the fundamental skill of reading. ■

Editor's Note: Nicki Arnold just completed her Masters degree in Psychology. Her interest in learning disabilities stems from her adopted son who is a student at Windward School, a school for learning disabilities.

References for parts of this article are available from NCLD.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

HELPING CHILDREN FEEL MORE CAPABLE

■ Allow the child to take on special projects for you, even if the other children might do them better or if it would be easier for you to do them yourself.

■ Help your child make improvements in just one or two areas at a time. Avoid pointing out mistakes in other things he does, so he doesn't feel that everything he does is wrong.

■ Display works of art, school papers, scouting honors, certificates of swimming achievement and so forth on the refrigerator or some chosen showcase.

■ Ask him to teach a skill to someone else, like a younger brother or sister.

■ Assign him well-defined, simple daily chores to do.

■ Help him to find his own abilities and allow him time to pursue them. If he's a good swimmer, don't neglect swimming because he's too busy with tutors.

HELPING CHILDREN FEEL MORE SIGNIFICANT

■ Learn to listen to your child. Without pressuring, encourage him to talk about his feelings and thoughts. Let him know that his ideas or concerns carry weight.

■ Help your child volunteer time to help an elderly neighbor, at a hospital, day-care center, therapeutic horseback riding or swimming class.

■ Don't forget to tell your child that you love him. Sometimes parents get out of the habit and it becomes awkward. Children with learning disabilities may have a special need to have it said.

■ When he experiences a success (like making a new friend or learning to drive) celebrate to show him that his life events matter to the whole family.

■ Involve the whole family in different family outings based on what individual persons would like to do, e.g., visit a doll museum for one child, go to garage sales for another, and play basketball for another.

HELPING CHILDREN FEEL MORE POWERFUL

■ Help the child with a good sense of humor recognize the power he has to change people's moods with humor.

■ Teach the child to make decisions. Start by giving two choices and gradually increase his responsibility for recognizing and choosing between alternatives.

■ Have the child help set the dinner menu, select what will be in the lunches he takes to school, and order his own food at restaurants.

■ Have the child make a schedule for himself with your help in determining average homework time, bedtime, etc. Allow him to determine the order.

■ Let the child buy his own clothes, choose the color, or pick between two styles.

■ Help the child recognize self-defeating behaviors like fear or failure and lack of motivation. You may want to find a counseling group to help.

■ Be aware of natural parent tendencies to hold your child back for his own protection. Take a look at the decisions you make for your child and carefully assess the risks of having the child make those decisions for himself.

HELPING CHILDREN FEEL MORE WORTHY

■ Recognize and point out the inner qualities that the child has that make him special—his sensitivity to animals, his ability to have fun, his regard for others' feelings, his playfulness, desire to understand things, ability to make others laugh, or his creativity.

■ Promote hobbies, such as collections, photography, gardening, crafts, or music.

■ Demonstrate respect for all people. Discuss the uniqueness of each person and point out that all have qualities to be admired.

■ Help the child meet positive role models in college students or adults with learning disabilities.

■ Discuss the child's problems openly with him. Emphasize the positive and let him know that trouble in school does not mean he will not do well in life.

THE GAME PLAN

BY GAIL MURPHY SONBUCHNER

Editor's Note: This is a true story taking place in a public high school in Minnesota.

Defense! Defense! The words still echoed in Jeff's ears as he drove across town to Maplewood High School. He drove slowly through the wet slush with the soft, white snow hitting the road. Winter storm warnings were out for northeastern Minnesota with six to eight inches of new snow expected.

"We could have won! We could have! If only it hadn't snowed. Damn snow! We're a fast team, and we have to play in the snow," he snarled to himself as he pushed down the accelerator and skidded into the school parking lot.

Maplewood High School was a long, low, brick building nestled into the oak and maple trees of the hillside. Jeff pulled into one of the few remaining spaces at the far end of the parking lot. Sitting there for a few minutes he watched other students run for the door, the cold north wind whipping at their faces as they turtle-doved into their jackets.

Jim Finney, the quarterback, saw him sitting there, cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, "Good game Friday night, Jeff!" Giving the high sign he disappeared into the building.

Maybe if I wait just a few more minutes I'll get up enough nerve not to go in at all. "God I hate this place!" he muttered, pounding his fist against the steering wheel. He could hear his mother telling him to "play the game, just go to school and get that diploma." Well here goes, he thought, as he pushed himself out of his truck and trudged into the school.

The five-minute bell was ringing as he walked to his locker. He wasn't carrying any books, he never did. He stuffed his jacket into the narrow bottom half of his locker and grabbed a few books from the top.

First hour he had Mrs. Murphy. Mrs. Murphy with her cheery attitude and tons of rules. She never let down! He smiled to himself as he thought about her on the line of their football team! A tough one, that one! All of his Irish blarney and charm hadn't weakened the war they were waging.

"Hey Jeff! Wait up! I looked for you at the dance Friday night. You said you'd be there," Cindy said as she caught up with him, giving him her most disappointed look.

"Ah, I had to work at the last minute," Jeff lied. He'd felt more like decking someone after that game than dancing. "Jerry got sick, so I filled in for him. Good time, huh?"

"Yeah, good videos and lots of dancing. We all went over to Jana's house for pizza later. See if you can make the next one! Later!" she said as she punched him in the arm and headed off in the opposite direction towards her first hour class.

THE DUMMY ROOM

The halls were just about cleared out as he walked by the room once more. The dummy room. Why didn't they just call it that right out—for the dummies. HIS room. Finally there were only two kids left at the end of the hall, so he walked quickly back to the room and slid onto his chair just as the final bell rang.

"Morning, Jeff. You're looking tired. Tough weekend?" Mrs. Murphy commented as she looked at him while sorting through papers.

"No way. Everything's cool," he answered. "Say Rick, I hear you and Chuck totaled out his car Saturday!"

"Yeah. Sure did. Hit a deer just about four miles out of town. I had to take both feet and push my way out! We made it to the cities, though. Got there just about closing time!" Rick said with a smug grin as he leaned back in his chair.

"What happened to the head? Did you get to keep it? I'd love to have a rack!"

"Not much left of it. One of the horns tore clean off. Cops took everything. Cruise Mack's tonight and look at it. What a mess! You know, it was an ace too. A classic even with 130,000 on it."

"130,000! Cripes! Mine doesn't even have that many, and it's eight years older!" Jeff laughed as he took out his novel for the first fifteen minute reading period.

Rick gave Mrs. Murphy his pass to the counselor's office and headed out the door.

"Put your book away, Jeff. Since we're alone, I want to discuss something," Mrs. Murphy said as she pulled up a chair on the other side of Jeff's table.

Oh boy, thought Jeff. Here comes a lecture. She has that look on her face that says I've had it.

"You know, Jeff, you've really been tough to put up with around here. In fact, you've been downright ornery. You may be able to convince other people that it's because of the football games, but I don't buy it. I think it's because you're in here, and you don't want to be. Not only that—you think you're dumb, and that's why you're in here."

"How do you think I should feel? I'm here, aren't I?" His eyes looked angry and cold. "You expect me to remember things, and I just can't," he spit out.

"You should have seen my Mom when I got that mid-quarter! I've never gotten one before. Last year they made sure I had everything in and passed my tests, so I wouldn't get one."

"That's true. People have been carrying you along for years now. I can see why you think you're dumb! All of this protection tells you that, but it's not true. It's time for you to do your work yourself," she said as she leaned forward to study him. "This room doesn't carry a guarantee with it that you'll pass your classes."

Jeff got to his feet and walked to the other side of the room.

"Now wait a minute before you fly off the handle! Sit down and let me finish. If you study and just can't make it, I'll step in and work with your teacher to see what the problem is. But Jeff, I'm not convinced that you're really trying."

Jeff looked up at her with fire in his eyes and then quickly looked down again.

"Well. Are you really working at it?"

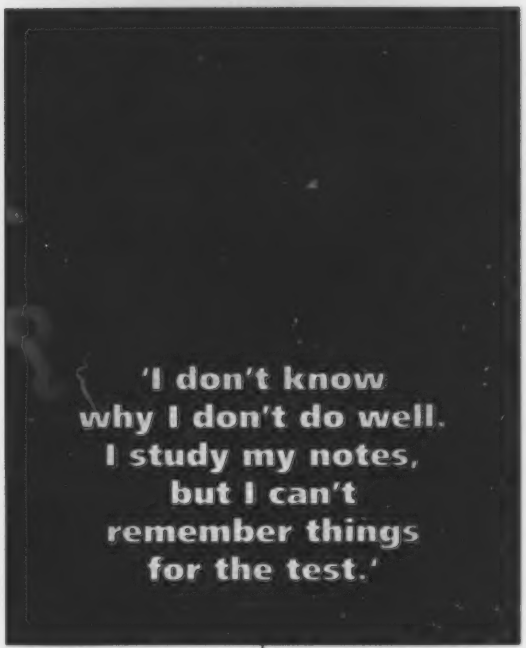
Jeff was uncomfortable with the silence in the room. He watched her sit back down and wait for him to answer. Why didn't she just say something?

"I don't know why I don't do well. I study my notes, but I can't remember things for the test. The stuff I study never seems to be on it." He gave a nervous laugh and shifted on the chair. His eyes were no longer angry. He felt a lump in his throat and hated that feeling.

"Good. You're being honest. You just said that the stuff you study isn't on the test. Why is that, Jeff? Do you think you're dumb? Is that it?"

"Yeah. That's right. I'm dumb. You told me I was smart after you gave me all those tests but nothing's changed. I still can't cut it."

Mrs. M. just sat there not saying anything. The minutes passed, and he started to roll his pencil around and around in his hand. He glanced at her for a second and saw her just sitting there waiting.



"Yeah, right. That's what I really think. Those dumb tests don't mean a thing. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

YOU'RE DEAD WRONG

"No, Jeff, but it's what I thought I'd hear. Let me tell you something. You're wrong, DEAD WRONG! A lot of kids have the same problems you have but can't get the help you're getting in here for one reason. Those kids are working up to their ab'ity. In other words, they don't have the ability to do better work. But you do have the ability to do much better work. The first big step is to stop feeling sorry for yourself and find out what you can do about passing those tests."

"If I'm smart, why can't I remember what I study? Why did I fail that history test?" Jeff leaned back on his chair and stared past her but did not meet her eye.

"I'm not a doctor with tests that can see into your brain, or into the hours after school when you say you're studying. There's a piece of the puzzle missing, Jeff. You need to work with the material, so your brain will understand it and remember it. That's why you are trying the different study guide strategies in here right now."

"I did that study guide with the line down the side for this test. It didn't work, did it? I still flunked the test. Last year I took all of the tests before school in the LD room. How 'bout if I take my history tests in here." Jeff whispered.

Mrs. M. looked at him with a surprised look on her face. "You sneak in here at the last minute now so nobody will see you come into this room! Now you want to come in here more often! Are you really that desperate? No, Jeff. No way. But I'll make you a deal. You show me what you do at home with your history class every day, so I have proof that you're really doing it. I expect you to do it the way we practice in class. None of this not taking anything home and complaining because you didn't pass the class. When you can pass your classes without any help, you can opt out of here! The goal of this class is to help you discover how to make it on your own. I don't keep students in here any longer than they need it. It's up to you.

"You're really ticked because I didn't fix it so you would pass everything. I don't fix anything. You do. I don't pass classes. You do. I just help you figure out ways to work with your disability areas. You have too much going for you to let yourself be handicapped this way.

"Think of it like learning how to canoe. The first time out you're shaky and not sure how to paddle it even though someone showed you how. Then you go out and try it yourself again. You may paddle around for awhile and everything will be fine, so you won't need any more help. Then you may end up tipping over and will need to know how to get back into the canoe. You may need to add a few more strategies to what you're already doing, so you'll be shown different ways of attacking the problem. You keep trying new strategies and changing how you do it until you learn what works for you. The goal is to be able to do it by yourself, just like you must be able to pass your tests by yourself."

She got up and walked over to the window, waiting for him to say something. Five minutes passed.

Finally Jeff broke the silence.

"Umph. Never thought of it like that. I guess whatever I'm doing isn't working. O.K. It's a deal. I'll try it your way, at least for awhile. And once it works, I'm outta here!"

WE NEED A GAME PLAN

"That's all I ask. Now, we need a game plan just like you need a game plan in your football game. We'll start with a two-part game plan. The first part of the game plan has to do with 'how': how do you learn?"

"That's easy. I learn easier by listening than by reading," Jeff said looking her right in the eye now.

"That's right. That's why just reading the study guide you made from your notes didn't work."

Jeff sat straight up in his chair with that comment. "My sister does it. She just reads her notes."

"You're not your sister, Jeff. She must learn easier by seeing things. You need to hear them, so you must not only read them out loud but you need to ask yourself questions about them out loud.

"The second part of the game plan has to do with 'when': when do you study this way?"

"I did what you said before. Well, not quite...almost. I guess I didn't do it every night."

"O.K. That could be a missing puzzle piece. You need to work with this information every night. Set aside a time when you can do it every day. What time would that be?"

"The only time that would stay the same every day would be right before bed."

"That sounds good. So far you're going to question yourself and read your study guide out loud right before you go to bed. Some people even use a tape recorder, so they can carry on a conversation with it or listen to it right before they go to sleep."

"Why didn't you tell me this stuff right away? Why did you wait until I failed a test? You know, if I don't get a C in that class, Mom said I'd be grounded. Grounded! She just doesn't understand. Wrestling starts in three weeks. If I don't pass this quarter, I'm really bummin."

"The reason I didn't discuss this plan with you was that you hadn't done anything yet. There's no reason to change something that might work. Now you're ready to listen and try different strategies.

"Don't look back and make excuses for yourself, Jeff. That doesn't help. Use what you know now. Paddle your canoe with these strategies and see if

You keep trying new strategies and changing how you do it until you learn what works for you

they work for you."

Friday Jeff hurried into the room with a smile on his face.

"Well, Mrs. M. I passed the test! Even if it was only a D-. You know, though, that's a lot of work for just a D-." His smile disappeared as he plunked down onto his chair.

COMPLETING THE PUZZLE

"Yes it is, Jeff. You have the ability to get a much higher grade, so there's still a piece to the puzzle missing. Think back to the canoe lesson. Remember that you may need to add another strategy."

"So you're saying that I need to add another strategy to what I'm doing?"

"Possibly. We know that the plan worked to a point but wasn't successful enough. What part of the puzzle could be missing? Did you know all of the information on your study guide?"

"Sure did. I knew all of it."

"Are you sure you had all of the information you needed in your study guide?"

"I suppose. I don't know. What the heck, the test is done. I don't want to see it again. We're already on the next chapter."

"You get out your study guide and history book while I go get a copy of that test." Jeff spent the next twenty minutes locating the answers to each test item in his notes. He found that twelve items were missing. That was one-fourth of the test!

The next day they met with the history teacher to find out where those questions came from. They found out that eight of the questions were from class notes and the other four were from the summary at the end of the chapter.

Jeff went back to the room shaking his head. "No wonder I couldn't answer those questions."

"What can you do now, Jeff? Think about it while I help Rick with a math problem, and I'll get back to you."

Ten minutes later she sat down across from Jeff again. "Well, what did you decide to do?"

"I don't know why we need this stuff anyway! We've been hearing about this stuff every year!" Jeff answered sulkily.

"That's not the issue, Jeff, and you know it. Stick to the goal. What is the goal?"

"I hafta figure out how to get everything in my study guide that will be on the test. I suppose I could copy someone else's notes."

"That would be one way of doing it. It would help as long as you copied the notes of a top student. If you don't get them from a top student, you'll probably still be missing information.

"Another strategy would be to write single words on your paper when the teacher says something. Write the words so you can read them even if they're not spelled correctly. Then go back sometime the same day and look information about them up in your text. Put that information on your study guide. Don't forget to include the chapter summary, too.

"You know, Jeff, each teacher has a certain way of teaching and testing. Each one thinks certain things are important, and you have to figure out what that teacher thinks is important. Obviously, if something is discussed a lot, that teacher is going to ask a question about it. Put some kind of mark by things that are talked about a lot.

Mrs. M. came back from lunch to find this note on the blackboard: 'It's a B+!!! Aren't you proud of me!!! J'

"Let's review. You have three parts to your game plan now. What are they?"

"First, I have to read the information on my study guides out loud and ask myself questions about it out loud. Secondly, I need to be sure to do this every night before bed. The third thing I'll do is start writing down important words that I hear and fill in information about them later. I also need to fill in information from the chapter summary."

Jeff worked on his game plan in class. First hour was spent completing study guides and then reading and questioning himself out loud.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Finally the day of the test came. Jeff poked his head in during third hour to ask if he could take the test with Mrs. M.

"Do you have trouble reading it?" Mrs. M. asked.

"Well, no. But I'd feel better if I took it in here."

"Jeff, no crutches. You're prepared, and you'll do just fine. Take a few deep breaths to clear your mind and go for it alone."

The next day Jeff had a bounce in his step as he came into first hour. "Hey, Mrs. M.! Guess what! This time I got a B-! Do you think I can do better than that?"

"That depends, Jeff. If you're asking me if you're smart enough to do better, the answer is yes. The part I'm not sure of is how much time you put in on this at home. You're the one who has to be honest about that," she said as she smiled at him.

"Well, I worked Monday, Wednesday and Thursday nights until twelve o'clock. I guess you could say I didn't do much with it except in this class," he said as he studied her carefully.

"You answered your own question, Jeff! You've put the least amount of time on this test and gotten your best grade! Why do you think it worked that way?"

"I guess I did it the right way for me. You know I'm going to win our deal and get outta here! I'll put more time in on the next test and see what happens. Say, how 'bout me taking American Lit in here next semester?"

Jeff laughed as he ducked his head. "I know! I know! I'm paddling, Teach, I'm paddling!"

Two weeks later Mrs. M. came back from lunch to find this note on the blackboard: "It's a B+!!! Aren't you proud of me!!! J" ■

Editor's Note: Gail Murphy Sonbuchner is the author of Help Yourself: How to Take Advantage of Your Learning Styles, *published by New Reader's Press. She teaches high school in Minnesota.*

SILENCE SCREAMS

by Amy K. Isley

It screams so loud
at night sometimes
that I can not
sleep.

All alone
in a world of people
that don't
understand,
longing for someone
to take my
hand.

Sharp words
of teachers telling
how stupid
I am
haunt my sleep,
but I'll show them.
I'll show them all.

Reach a highest
high,
listening to
discouraging words
no more.
I have my talents
and
with them
I'll fly.

I'll follow this
dream
where ever it takes
me
and with my courage
I'll make it
come true.
On the wings of
courage I'll fly.
Courage from
my beau,
my mother
and
my father.

TO SEE WHAT YOU SEE

by Estelle Pottern Epstein

I see you, child. I hear you.
I know the road you travel.
Baby steps, not giant steps
carry you along.

I'll be there, child. Yes, near you.
Together we'll unravel each concept
piece by piece
until all parts belong.

I know how hard you work, child,
concepts harder than they seem.
I'll cheer you on day by day,
enhance your self-esteem.

I try to see what you see, child.
How can I simplify?
So one day I may hear you say,
"That's as easy as pie!"

You shall set the pace, child.
I'll pick you up if you should fall.
Mentor, guide and friend to you,
I hear your voiceless call.

Like the tortoise and the hare,
the race is clearly won
when the runner reaches the goal,
not when the race has begun.

Editor's Note: Amy Isley is a senior at Buckingham County High School in Buckingham, Virginia. She plans to attend community college in the fall.

Estelle Pottern Epstein taught at the Horace Mann Laboratory School at Salem State College for 23 years as a teaching supervisor in Grade 3.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BECOMING AN ATTORNEY: FROM L.D. TO J.D.

Excerpts from a Work in Progress

BY BETH A. CALLAHAN, ESQ.

I was one of those kids who was born talking, a genius. So much so that I went to nursery school almost a whole year early. My mother tells a story that she decided not to say a word to me on a grocery store run. I talked from the moment she put me in the car through a week's worth of shopping for the family, the ride home and the unloading. I never noticed she hadn't contributed to the conversation at all.

The first signs of my learning disability manifested themselves in third grade. I was not keeping up with my peers in math. I showed signs of being perceptually impaired, my handwriting skills were very poor, I reversed letters and numbers, and as written work in school became more important, it was obvious that my verbal skills were not matched by my writing abilities and math skills.

By fourth grade my parents began looking into private schools and different ways of teaching. They made the decision to keep me at Glen Ridge, but keep me back a year. It was a decision that was not easy for them and maybe less easy for me, but one that changed my life forever. I don't have any permanent scars from the minimal teasing that I took from my new classmates.

I attended Glen Ridge Schools in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. This was the early seventies and open classrooms were the craze, giant rooms with groups of children in little pods of learning. No teachers got up in front of the class and taught. We did not have our own desks, just large rectangular and horseshoe tables. We worked at our own pace, and when we were done, for example, in math if we accomplished all of our work, we, I mean they, the other children in my class, got to go to math land.

Math land was a section of the room up on a stage that had math games and puzzles. I went to math land once. It was the second year of fourth grade and the last week of school. My teacher, Miss Morra, who I loved and who spent many hours in class with me alone working on math, was going over division with me one more time. I interrupted and said, "Oh Miss Morra, could I please go to math land?" She said, "Beth you know you can't go until you're done." I said that I had never been there. I still remember the look of amazement on her face as she said "Never?" I said, "Not even one time." Miss Morra closed the book, took my hand and off to math land we went.

I have to say that it was not all I had fantasized about since there was still math going on up there. The irony is if I had spent more time in math land, in that magical land of alternate learning, I may have learned more and quicker than I did "going at my own pace."

In addition to staying back a year, I received resource room help for math, handwriting, and spelling, and worked on eye hand coordination with two specialists in the summers. I was wearing a patch on one eye to correct a lazy eye problem. I had many things going for me, like my mother, Elizabeth Callahan, who has been in Special Education for her entire career and has a Doctorate in Education. My father, Edward Callahan, is an attorney and not the kind of man who lets anyone mess with his kids.

A FOR ALABAMA, M FOR MASSACHUSETTS

Mr. Caruso was a legend in Glen Ridge. He taught fifth grade social studies and assigned learning the fifty states and capitals over the summer. Dr. Callahan purchased puzzles and tapes, we made col-

orful flash cards and finally resorted to a song that I could jump rope to. I could remember all the capitals of the states I had been in, so the east coast was more or less covered. It was the other thirty-some states that were a problem and the states all looked the same on the map to me. The jump rope was the key.

I arrived on my first day of fourth grade and sat down in his room and was handed the test. I could remember nothing. I was paralyzed. I guess he saw the tears welling up and said, "Miss Callahan, what is wrong?" I told him I couldn't remember them without my jump rope and he asked, quite matter of factly, if I had the rope in my locker. I did. He sent me to get it, and after a few jumps in the hall, most of the states and capitals appeared in my head and I survived and he was my favorite teacher.

A few weeks later we gave oral presentations. I decided not only to talk about the state of Massachusetts, I *became* the state of Massachusetts. My staff at home made a giant map of the state with pictures of all the highlights. I wore a three cornered hat and talked about the significance of the state. I had never given an oral presentation and I loved it. That's when I got interested in public speaking and politics, and I knew something else—that this was easy and I loved it.

I had some special help outside of the classroom in math and in handwriting, but I was an organizational disaster. Math was becoming my enemy and my seventh grade teacher seemed to get pleasure out of sending me to the board because the answer was always wrong. She pointed out the sloppiness of the handwriting and told my mother I was retarded. Just writing this, I can bring back the fear and loathing I had for her and that class and for that matter, most of the middle school math teachers I had encountered. It was difficult to be a star in some classes and a disaster in others.

HIGH SCHOOL

In high school, I managed to compensate for not always sterling test performances by writing good papers, always speaking up in class and being involved in every activity the school had to offer. I had a new nemesis, foreign language. I was lucky enough to get one of the most notorious vicious teachers in the school. He was pleased to announce test scores and throw you out of class for mispronunciation and fail the majority of students. I could make no sense of it. I was being publicly mortified. I will admit that I did not put in the time it takes to learn a new language. I had too much other work, like geometry and algebra and biology and history and English. I hated him and he scared me to death.

I switched to French and Monsieur McPadden. We sang every day. He was the nicest, most helpful teacher and human being. He gave credit for enthusiasm and effort and let all students repeat exams over and over until you mastered the material. I cannot speak or write French other than a few phrases and I still [don't] know the alphabet but it is clearly not the Monsieur's fault. I took every test at least five or six times. I was a permanent fixture in his after school class. (My L.D. consultant many years later told me I could not associate meanings to foreign words and only total immersion study would work.)

High school geometry must have cost my parents thousands and thousands of dollars. My tutor was Carl Hostnik, my neighbor, who is perhaps the finest teacher to ever teach math at Glen Ridge Schools. He drilled me with humor and patience and put in

I called home to ask my mother if I had a learning disability and she told me yes. I was shocked. No one had ever told me.

more than a good word for me with my teacher, Mr. Tenaro, who did the best he could with me. The C that I received was a victory, a triumph, and I had survived with a little help from my friends.

I became involved with Key Club in high school. My older brother got me involved in helping him run a Thanksgiving food drive from our back yard and I was hooked. I was a very socially conscious person, I was saving the whales and the rainforests and involved in many a-thons. By the time I was a sophomore, I was an officer. President by my junior year, I was getting involved with other schools in the area, speaking at Kiwanis meetings, and motivating peers to get involved. We held dances and parties and fundraisers. We danced all night for Jerry's kids. I was meeting people who were as into it as I was. A life long friend just reminded me of a Christmas cookie sale at which we received so many orders, we enlisted all the moms and grandmas to help fill the orders. My senior year, I became a state officer and was speaking publicly at least three nights a week and planning conventions and campaigns and loving every second of it.

I was now majoring in extracurricular activities. I graduated an average student who had done above average things for an eighteen year old. I was not the most popular kid in school. I took myself very seriously, but I had some good friends and I was a cheerleader and student leader and I received the Citizenship Cup, which is the only award given at graduation and it is given to the senior who has, in the eyes of the faculty, given the most to the community and who is both an outstanding student and person. I was hardly an outstanding student. I think I was the only recipient ever for whom they did not mention the grade point average. I did not care, the cup was mine. I was thrilled. I also received a state and international service award. I was going to Catholic University in Washington, D.C., despite a guidance counselor's suggestion I attend a trade school of some kind. The thought never crossed my mind.

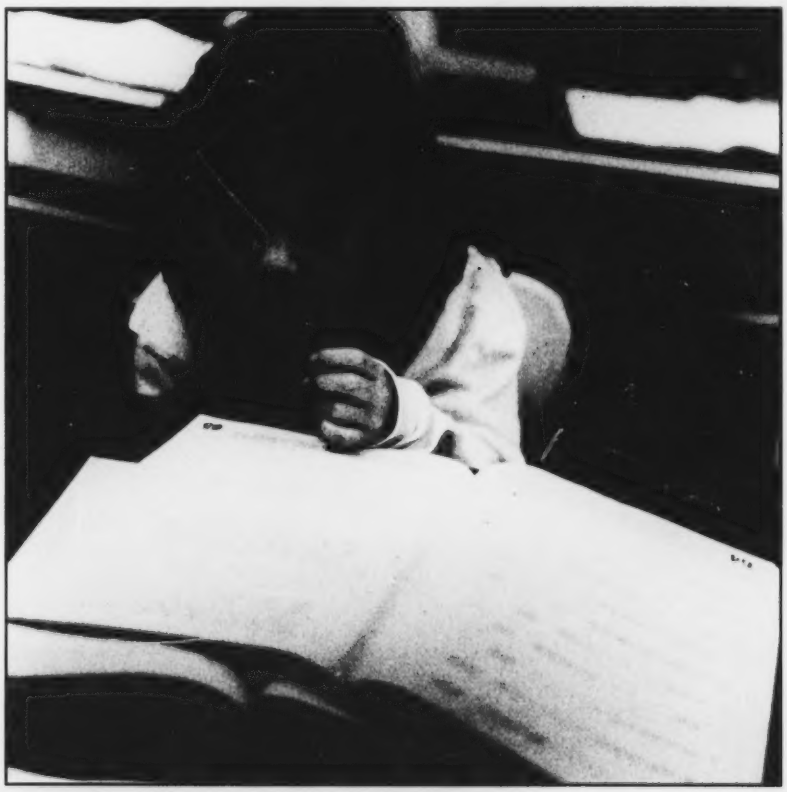
COLLEGE AND REVELATION

I loved college. My grades were weak and I failed Spanish, but I was having a great time. I pulled it together a little bit for my second semester. Sophomore year I fell apart. I had a wicked case of sophomore slump. I was doing well in politics, which was my major. I had been dropped from math by the professor. I was about to fail Spanish II. I went to see the Dean of Students who said, "Beth do you have a learning disability?" I told him, "No," and he said, "I want you to get tested." I called home to ask my mother if I had a learning disability and she told me yes. I was shocked. No one had ever told me. I had thought I was so stupid because I could run circles around the smartest kids on anything oral and then they out-tested me and out-mathed me and out-scienced me and out-spelled me every time. I got walking pneumonia and went home early for Thanksgiving. Dr. Elaine Fine, a long time colleague of my mother's, came to our house in Glen Ridge and tested me.

I was learning disabled, all right. So many unexplained things became clear. I was devastated and

relieved that there was a reason for why everything took me so much longer to learn than everyone else. I was angry at my parents for not telling me. I went from relieved, to infuriated, to determined to live up to my academic potential. After first semester, I went back to school with a plan of action. I was going to learn how to be a student. I was going to get my language requirement waived and I was going to deal with my math/science requirement in the summer. I was different. I was looking at my past and future. I was really flawed and it had a name. Yet I was going to fix it or fight it or make the best of it.

Early in second semester, I met a young man and we started dating and little did he know or I know that he would be instrumental in my academic success. He was an outstanding student and became an outstanding teacher and tutor to me. He became my best friend and boyfriend. He helped organize me and told me how smart I was and helped me become a really good student. My grades started to climb and I was inspired.



THOUGHTS OF LAW SCHOOL

Thoughts of law school returned and I was getting the old fire back. I sought out services at Catholic University and found that the programs for learning disabled students were basically non-existent. I had my new cause. I started doing research and found out that it was the law!! The law said they had to have a program to accommodate us and there were lots of people with learning disabilities. One was my friend, John Tiffey. He was gorgeous, organized and a great speaker and motivator. I took on the cause and ran for Legislative Vice President of the University. In an upset, I won by 15 votes out of over two thousand cast.

Right after the election, we wrote a report on the plight of the Learning Disabled Program and how the students were suffering and how the faculty was uneducated on the subject. Frank Persico, the same Dean of Students who had known enough to notice my learning disability, helped us lobby the powers that be. A full time

I questioned my abilities every day and I had to explain my disabilities over and over to receive accommodation

Learning Disabilities T.C. was hired to help both graduate and undergraduate students with learning disabilities. She advocated for accommodations. I am proud to say she is still there. That same semester I received the highest grades I had ever gotten. The hours I was studying were paying off. I was learning how to use a computer and I was on the right track.

I realized that there were really ignorant people in high academic positions. The Vice President of undergraduate studies asked me to quit the student government because I had a learning disability. He said I could never handle it and school too. When I pointed out that I was back in good academic standing, he didn't care. He didn't realize that I needed student government. I was good at it. It gave me access to my own secretary, Michelle Reynolds, who organized my life, who I consider one of my best friends in the world. It gave me an outlet other than academia. I got to step away from the books, into the spotlight, and up to the microphone and into controversy which, bizarrely enough, I felt more comfortable with. I was growing into a student. I was receiving reinforcement from my friends, Michelle, Nicole, Penny, and, of course, Chris, the greatest tutor of all time. They were fighting for me to succeed. My parents were thrilled with my political successes and with my academic success. I began to warn them that I wanted to go to law school.

My junior year was crazy and wonderful. I was the Legislative V.P., I had a great boyfriend. School was scary and challenging and hard and easy. I was not waiting until I was in trouble in a class. I was advocating for myself with professors. I was trying to be organized. I studied at Trinity College, a small all women's college and because I did not know anyone, there were no distractions. I was using every strategy I could get my hands on.

Chris and I went through love life traumas but we always wound up back together. I made the Dean's List. I cried and danced and yelled and so did my friends and family. I was now officially unstoppable. At the end of my junior year, I did not run for President of the student government. I was thinking LSAT. It was a difficult but necessary decision. I was giving up everything I was naturally good at to concentrate on the thing that I was worst at, and a standardized test at that.

My unstoppableness began to fade away and the miserable statistics of law school overpopulation and rejection rate and minimum standards filtered into my every thought. I didn't lose hope. I thought: Catholic University will accept me. I have proven myself to this school. I have dedicated myself to this school. I was wrong. Even after pulling off a reasonable LSAT score, which I took with accommodations, and after writing my story of learning disabilities and how I was a born advocate... The rejections were coming so fast that I knew the admissions committees were not even getting as far as my essay. Chris was getting rejected too, and he was Cum Laude his whole life. I had a 3.9 my senior year and two weeks before graduation, Seton Hall, Hartford, and Catholic were the only schools that had not rejected me.

My parents started making calls. We had to know someone who could find out what the problem

was at Seton Hall. We did. My Uncle Frank DeFilipis and his wife, Patty, lived in the same town as one of the Deans, Fred Caraballo. He told them I needed more documentation of my disability. I got to speak to him directly and he told me I was borderline. He said they had a summer program, called the LEO program and that if I survived, I would be accepted.

REALITY OF LAW SCHOOL

Just how I imagined the summer after my senior year, after I had worked so hard to prove myself, I still had more to prove. Particularly, that I could be a law student and compete with the best and the brightest. I was scared and tired and afraid I couldn't do it, not without Chris and not without knowing in my heart I really was smart enough. I was afraid not to accept the program, so I did. I graduated from college and less than two weeks later I moved home and started law school. The only thing I had to do was study—my mom and grandma took care of all meals, my father took care of defining every other word that I never heard of before. For the first time, Chris could not tutor me. He took care of getting me out of New Jersey on summer weekends and yet supported so much of my studying, when I am sure he wanted to be doing other things. He always let me hit the books for as long as I needed to.

I studied, slept, and ate. I also passed criminal law with an A and was told by Dean Caraballo it was one of the best exams. I made some good friends and educated some people on learning disabilities. I was blown away first semester of first year law by the difficulty of the subject matter, the qualifications of my peers, and that I was on my own. Chris returned to Washington where he got accepted at Catholic Law School. It was so intense that it took every amount of motivation I had to stick with it. I felt like a guppy swimming with the big fish. I questioned my abilities every day and I had to explain my disabilities over and over to receive accommodations.

I found mentors like Dean Ronald Riccio. From the moment I met him, he was supportive of me, of what I was made of, and what I believed in. I had difficult failures when I first tried to balance working for law firms and being a full time student. I lost one job for a mistake I made. I disclosed my disability after the mistake and was fired. My only regret is that I didn't sue them. I had to look hard and learn hard lessons before I found my way. It was very simple—do the best I could. Do not listen to the crazy people around you and if you are in a bad place, get out.

I spent the summer before my final year at Clancy, Callahan, and Smith. I was treated by my father, Edward Callahan, and his partner, Dennis Smith, as a student. They taught me about putting all that law to use. They challenged me, but never made me feel small or stupid. Criticism was constructive and they assumed I knew nothing, which I didn't. It was great. I was involved in the Legal Services clinic and I loved it. I was going to court and trying cases and representing people with real problems. At the end of the semester I made the decision to give up the clinic. I found myself giving up what I loved and was good at to get ready for the mother of all tests, the bar exam. Third year was very successful. I could taste victory. I was almost done. I had landed a great clerkship with Judge R. Newman. Chris and I had survived a traumatic, long-distance love affair and he was coming to New Jersey. We were taking on the bar together. I was selected com-

Those of us who are successful must keep talking and educating and helping. We can change the world. I know we can.

mencement speaker by my classmates over the top students in my class, over the editors of all the academic journals, and I was honored and thrilled. Homebase was exploding. It was my ultimate triumph. It justified everything I worked so hard for.

For the nine weeks after graduation, I never looked up from my books. I had no intention of ever going through the madness of bar preparation again. It had been my intention to take the New York and New Jersey bars. The New York Board of Bar Examiners failed to accommodate me. It was a fight to the end. I didn't take the New York bar. I took New Jersey and passed with flying colors on the first round. I knew the letter was in my mailbox. I wouldn't leave work. I tried to convince myself that I had failed. I kept humming the ant song (just what makes that little old ant...). I read the letter five times. Next thing I knew I was crying and yelling and leaping. I couldn't dial the phone fast enough. I don't think anyone could have been happier or more relieved. I was getting an Esq. at the end of my name. I thought about how stressful it had been and how much work and how worth it it was and how truly proud I was. I had met the challenge. I had ignored the nay sayers and I taken the discrimination and the disbelievers and I rose above them.

LIVING DAY BY DAY

I face my L.D. everyday and I work to become more organized and a better writer and a better lawyer and I am still challenged to do things differently. I love my work and in addition to working in a small general practice, I speak about L.D. and advocate for children with learning disabilities and other kinds of disabilities. I do consulting work for school districts on complying with the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. I help parents realize the rights of their children. I help children realize their potential and that they can make their own dream come true. I tell teachers my story and challenge them to be the catalyst for success for children with learning disabilities. Teach not only information but strategies. Be flexible and creative. Find that child's strengths so that the child can be energized by success and motivated because people are routing for them. Be prepared to pick up the pieces and gently put then back together.

I was lucky. I was a privileged kid born with the ability to say what I think and feel and I learned how to get what I needed to be successful. Not all kids can do that, so we need to do it for them while teaching them to survive and be happy and successful. Those of us who are successful must keep talking and educating and helping. We can change the world. I know we can. ■

Editor's Note: Beth Callahan is now a practicing attorney in the law firm of Clancy, Callahan and Smith in Roseland, New Jersey.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

SUMMIT ON LEARNING DISABILITIES: A NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

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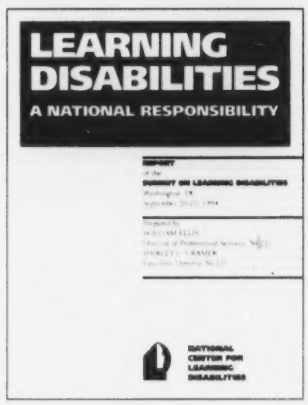

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WHAT IS THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES ACT?

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act is bold new legislation, signed into law on May 4, 1994. It establishes a national framework to broaden educational, career, and economic opportunities for all youth through partnerships among businesses, schools, community-based organizations, and state and local governments. It is a direct link between education and employment. Through grants from the federal government, states and communities will create comprehensive education and training systems to prepare all students for high-wage, high-skill jobs or further education.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

The legislation is aimed specifically at secondary and post-secondary school age youth, generally considered to be between the ages of 16 and 21. With only 25% of today's youth graduating from four year college programs, these systems will meet the needs of both immediately career bound and immediately college bound students. In addition, the programs are designed to help students with disabilities, students with diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, limited English-proficient students, out-of-school youth, and the academically talented.

There are no specific eligibility requirements to participate in School-to-Work programs. In fact, states and localities must describe in the grant application how they will ensure effective and meaningful opportunities for all students to participate in the School-to-Work program.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Students can enter a School-to-Work program in high school during their junior year. The program would extend from school into the workplace and continue for one or two years after high school. Students leaving the program would have both a high school diploma and a nationally recognized skill certificate. In addition, they will have experience and connections in their field of study.

One in six high school diplomas is earned through completion of GED requirements and other alternative diploma programs such as the External Diploma Program. Individuals may also enter a School-to-Work system via one of these alternative methods of completing high school requirements.

WHO DESIGNS THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS?

The cornerstone for all of this is partnerships between the school and community. Although the programs will be started with federal seed capital (grants), it is at the state and local level where the programs will be designed and implemented, and the application for grants will be made.

Educators, employers, business leaders, parents, community-based organizations, and other relevant parties would get together to outline the specific needs of the students, employers, and the community. Employers will help schools develop courses that prepare students for good jobs in the local area and will provide the work experience that reinforces what is learned in the classroom. Labor organizations will assist in planning, offering high-quality training, meaningful work experiences, and providing information on different types of jobs in the community. Community based organizations will help design programs that reach all youth, as well as serve as a broker between local employers, schools, and parents.

FACTORS COMMON TO ALL SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

Although there is a great deal of flexibility for designing specific School-to-Work programs across the country, the act requires that every School-to-Work Opportunities program to contain three core elements. These are:

■ SCHOOL-BASED LEARNING—Classroom instruction based on high academic and occupation skills standards as outlined in GOALS 2000.

■ WORK-BASED LEARNING—Through work experience, structured training, and mentoring at job sites.

■ CONNECTING ACTIVITIES—A variety of activities that build and maintain bridges between school and work. Examples include matching students with participating employers, and training job-site mentors and teachers.

With regard to school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities, the legislation requires the following components in all School-to-Work Opportunities programs:

■ A planned program of training and work experiences coordinated with school-based learning.

■ A program of study designed to meet the same academic content standards the state has established for all students, including where applicable, standards established under the GOALS 2000 Act, and designed to meet the requirements necessary to prepare a student for postsecondary education and achievement of a skills certificate.

■ A program of instruction and curriculum that integrates academic and vocational learning.

■ Broad instruction in the classroom and all that, to the extent practicable, exposes students to all aspects of an industry.

■ Effective secondary/ postsecondary linkages.

■ Career awareness, exploration and counseling.

■ Initial selection of a career major no later than the beginning of the eleventh grade.

■ All mentoring and instruction in all general competencies.

■ Assistance for students in finding jobs and continuing their education and training.

HOW WILL THESE PROGRAMS GET PUT INTO PLACE?

A key provision of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act is its authorization of grants to

States and communities will create comprehensive education and training systems to prepare all students for high-wage, high-skill jobs or further education

help states and communities build comprehensive School-to-Work systems. Funds awarded in fiscal year 1994 totaled $90 million. Congress appropriated $250 million for fiscal year 1995. The President has requested $400 million for fiscal year 1996. Five types of grants exist:

■ STATE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS: These will be used for developing the partnerships to participate in the design, development, and administration of School-to-Work Opportunities systems; designing challenging curricula; and supporting local planning and development activities.

■ STATE IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS: These will be competitively awarded to states which can demonstrate substantial ability to begin full-scale implementation of the statewide plan. These activities include recruiting and providing assistance to employers to provide work-based learning for students; providing training for teachers, employers, workplace mentors, counselors, and others; and working with localities to develop strategies to recruit and retain students in School-to-Work Opportunities programs, including those from diverse backgrounds.

■ DIRECT FEDERAL GRANTS TO LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS: These competitively awarded grants will directly support a number of local partnerships that have built a sound planning and development base and are ready to implement local School-to-Work Opportunities initiatives.

■ DIRECT FEDERAL GRANTS TO LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS SERVING HIGH POVERTY AREAS: These grants will also be competitively awarded to enable development and implementation of School-to-Work Opportunities programs in high-poverty urban and rural areas.

■ DIRECT FEDERAL GRANTS FOR TERRITORIES AND NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH: Grants to support School-to-Work Opportunities systems in the territories and for Native American youth will also be available as part of the program.

HOW TO FIND OUT ABOUT SCHOOL-TO-WORK OPPORTUNITIES IN YOUR AREA?

Eventually all states and local communities will have School-to-Work Opportunities programs. However, because not all states and communities are prepared to undertake such a challenge immediately, implementation will occur in waves, with those beginning early leading the way for others to follow.

For further information, contact the national School-to-Work Opportunities Information Center at (202) 401-6222, or contact your state School-to-Work liaison, or the Education or Labor regional office that serves your state. ■

Editor's Note: This report was prepared by David Fleishman, NCLD's Assistant Director of Professional Services. The information was obtained from The Internet.

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Helping All of Us To Reach Higher

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THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

MOVING FROM INSTITUTIONS TO INDEPENDENCE

Providing an Alternative to School-Based Programs for Learning Disabled Adults

BY LAURA IVES

INDEPENDENT LIVING 5

Editor's Note: Some individuals with learning disabilities require specially careful nurturing and training in the skills necessary for independent living. Here is one example of a program which brings together a number of individuals with a variety of disabilities.

There are currently many post-secondary options for learning disabled adults which run in conjunction with school-based programs. These programs provide a variety of alternatives from skills instruction to communal living—a common goal is to teach living skills to promote further independence. The now five-year old Anchor to Windward (ATW) program takes this goal one step further for those ready to make the transition to supported independent living.

ATW services a group of adults with learning disabilities who possess low to low average intelligence. They live in Marblehead, Massachusetts, a small historic coastal community in which the experiences of daily life are manageable. Each member lives in his or her own small single apartment. Each works and is responsible for the care and maintenance of the necessities of daily living. They attend town meetings, inform themselves and vote regularly, and with the help of the community advisory board, consistently seek new ways to make contributions to their community.

Anchor to Windward's staff-to-resident ratio of 2.5 to 6 provides a level of individualization that meets residents' needs as they arise. Members must be able to hold down at least a part-time job, but are encouraged, with ATW's help, to seek and hold full-time jobs.

Currently, the program's two male residents work in the mailrooms of large corporations. The women's jobs vary: one works as a preschool aide, one works retail in a large department store, one works in a pet store, and one for a large drug store.

Adults with serious learning disabilities have a complex set of needs which must be addressed if they are to be able to move from a school/institution based program to independence. ATW residents are expected to manage most living skills with support targeted to these needs, but not constant supervision. ATW's program components are structured to meet these needs and include the following.

WORK SUPPORT

Anchor to Windward helps residents obtain a job based on individual skill levels and ability. Staff assist in the interview process, if necessary, however the process is usually better served by providing training in interview skills and role playing. Once a job is obtained, ATW contacts the supervisor and explains how the new employee works best. For example, we might let an employer know of the resident's perceived work habits, the desirability of written instructions to compensate for his/her difficulty remembering and following multiple verbal instructions, and the importance of establishing priorities. We might suggest that the employee carry the same responsibility for a few weeks, and once mastered, be given more.

Employers have responded favorably to such guidance from the program. With it, they experience less frustration and receive more effective work from their employee. Follow-up calls are made to each supervisor

GENERAL POLICIES FOR AUTHORS OF THEIR WORLD

- Articles should not exceed 1500 words (about 6 double spaced typewritten pages).
- Subheadings will be incorporated into each article. *It is our preference that you develop your own subheadings.*
- Articles should be typed and *double spaced.* Note: They may be submitted on a computer disk (3 1/2" double density disk. Word Perfect). If you submit a disk, it should be accompanied by one print-out copy.
- Articles should be submitted in triplicate. *Manuscripts* cannot be returned.
- Generally we are not able to publish charts unless they are incorporated into the body of the text.
- You should include a brief biographical note.
- Articles may be on any aspect of learning disabilities. Sometimes THEIR WORLD highlights a particular topic of interest. If you would like more information on this please communicate with the Executive Editor.
- *Deadline for submitting articles:* THEIR WORLD is published in the spring. Articles should be submitted no later than December 15 for that issue.
- Please note that photographs unrelated to the text are often used throughout the magazine. Every effort is made to match them to the spirit of the article. THEIR WORLD reserves the right to make that judgement.
- Send manuscripts and/or disks to: The Executive Editor, THEIR WORLD, NCLD, 381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1420, New York, NY 10016.

at approximate six week intervals to remind them of our availability and our desire to work through any areas of difficulty or misperception. As a follow up to work issues which might arise, ATW holds weekly Rap Group where we focus on problem solving. We feel that by doing everything we can to assure a positive work experience, we are instilling pride and success in Anchor to Windward members.

SOCIAL SKILLS

We provide these skills in multiple ways, primarily through weekly groups. During these groups we focus on how to be heard, how to ask for help, how to get your needs met, how to listen and how to share time. We teach the process of how to function within a group. Our goal is to learn what we expect from each other. We problem solve around such issues as what is a group, do members of a group need to be friends, what does being a friend mean. These groups are also a place to wonder about mis-perceptions; does saying "I don't want to go to dinner tonight mean I don't like you, or does it mean I'm tired and want to stay in?"; could it also mean, "I'm upset with you and I'm not sure how to work through this."

SOCIAL CLUB

As part of our program we offer a social club comprised of members of the independent living program and other local adults who are interested in experiencing social growth through social activity. The club meets and plans the ways in which they would like to socialize. An ATW staff member supports this effort and attends each activity. Presently we have 14 active members and the group meets two times a month. In addition to having fun, they work through issues of compromise, decision making and finances, as well as

Adults with serious learning disabilities have a complex set of needs which must be addressed if they are to be able to move from a school/institution based program to independence

making new friends and growing. Activities include concerts, baseball games, museums, apple picking and visiting historic sights in and around New England.

LIVING AND LEARNING SKILLS

We support independent living in a number of ways. Each person is responsible for paying their own bill; we provide support with monthly statements, and help to establish monthly budgets based on income. Here again we use problem solving skills to enable each person to decide how to make financial decisions; if you love baseball, how many tickets can you buy? If you buy too many tickets, what can you cut out of your expenses? What are the choices?

In this skills set we also address how to organize one's home to be comfortable and clean. We work together at first to determine how to clean and in what order, what needs to be done daily, weekly and monthly. It is expected that apartment maintenance is done by the individual and an ATW staff member monitors their efforts and provides helpful hints with organization and what products to use. We also teach nutrition and provide guidance on how to plan menus and buy groceries according to those menus.

THERAPEUTIC SUPPORT

Both group and individual support programs address therapeutic issues. Once basic social skills are accomplished, self esteem begins to increase for our members and is used as a base for other interactions in everyday life. For example, one of the common threads of this population is difficulty in maintaining friendships. Our Men's and Women's group helps process these difficulties in order to understand the social basis of friendships and the expectations of how to be a friend. While these groups are not designated as therapy, they provide a therapeutic process which enables the members to obtain skills on multiple levels. The goals of the groups are to help acknowledge and understand the perception of the situation as seen by the resident and then problem solve to appropriately manage the situation to the point of resolution. This experience in problem solving becomes the basis of interactions throughout their lives. It is then practiced in daily living which is essential for those with learning disabilities. Repetition and the opportunity to consistently practice acquired skills is a highly beneficial way to teach learning disabled people.

In addition to groups, we offer what we call "private time" for one-on-one counseling. This is a time where each member has an opportunity to discuss and problem solve personal issues they do not wish to share with the group. For members who need more therapeutic support we arrange therapists and work closely with them to ensure proper support.

SUMMARY

By providing this combination of support services, Anchor to Windward helps our members gain greater independence. The program continues to evolve as we learn more about the individual and collective needs of our members. Our goal is to enable them to live independent and fulfilling lives. ■

Editor's Note: Laura Ives is the Executive Director of Anchor to Windward in Marblehead, Massachusetts.

MAINROADS TO SELF-DETERMINATION

A Road Map to Adult Independent Living

BY KATHRYN MOERY

A year ago, 25 participants in the MAINROADS to Self-Determination Project filtered into the Family Resource Center on Disabilities' (FRCD) downtown Chicago office on a hot September day. For two months prior to this outing, all of the high school youth had been to the FRCD office for the initial project interview with a parent or close family member. Now they were here again, on their own. They came from all parts of the city, some arriving on public transportation, some having been dropped off by a family member. Some wore jackets or sweaters tied around their waists, prepared for the climate changes at Wrigley Field, the destination of this first exploration, to see the Cubs battle the Pirates. For the most part they stood around, or sat silently, clutching bag lunches, anticipating meeting other students and all of the MAINROADS Project staff for the first time.

SURVEYING THE MAP AND USING THE LEGEND

MAINROADS to Self-Determination is a project of the Family Resource Center on Disabilities, funded by the U.S.Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, as a model transition project. Recently, the MAINROADS Project was designated as an exemplary program for Family/Professional Collaboration by the North Central (Region V) Information Exchange in Minnesota.

MAINROADS is an acronym which stands for the unique components of the project: Mentoring, Assertiveness, Inclusion, Networking, Real opportunities, Advocacy, Decision making, Socialization.

From the 80 degree heat of that first meeting, through the below zero temperatures of a Chicago winter, bonds among students and staff have developed, as they have traveled this road to adulthood, through a series of monthly workshops, community explorations, and individualized activities.

Approximately half of the youth have disabilities, including a significant number with a learning disability. The other half do not have disabilities. Most of the youth are from minority, low-income families, and they attend over 15 different high schools in all areas of the city. All have made a voluntary commitment to participate in the project.

Staff, who are adults with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities, reflecting the demographics and diversity of the students themselves, act as mentors to the students. A student with a disability is paired with a student without a disability, who attends the same high school, or lives in the same community. Through these unique partnerships, students mentor each other as they mutually develop clear road maps for the future, fueled by the development of assertiveness, networking, advocacy, decision making and socialization skills leading to self-determination.

Checkpoints along this road to adulthood include visits to prospective employment sites, colleges/training programs, city and state agencies, and housing sites to meet potential employers, admissions personnel, professors, service providers, legislators, and landlords that can help smooth the bumps out of their roads. Through integrated community group and individually designed experiences, MAINROADS participants see that a wide array of post-secondary opportunities exist for everyone, regardless of the presence or absence of a disability; but multiple routes can be taken to reach the same destination, which are self-determined based on unique

A wide array of post-secondary opportunities exist for everyone, regardless of the presence or absence of a disability

needs, preferences and interests.

Currently, over 30 students are "en route" to the future, having started as high school juniors, and will continue the journey through their senior year. To help keep the road clear of obstacles that might prohibit arrival at the final destination, participants will receive follow-along services after graduation from high school.

CHECKPOINTS, MILEAGE MARKERS, AND ROAD BLOCKS

Over the past year, students have traveled the MAINROADS to explore many different community sites, meet key people, and set long-term goals and short-term objectives for their future.

Since transportation is frequently cited as one of the most significant barriers to employment/education/community participation, the first checkpoint included a workshop and exploration on access to public transportation, in collaboration with the regional transit and commuter railway system serving Chicago and surrounding suburbs. To develop and reinforce skills for gaining independence using public transportation, subsequent group activities were held at a number of different locations. Through printed maps and directions, and through the support of staff mentors and family members, participants who had never traveled alone now use public transportation independently, or arrange to travel with other project participants, to all group activities, as well as to other sites within the community.

This metamorphosis was emerging by the next exploration in January. The wind chill that Saturday morning was 30 degrees below zero. Eighteen out of 25 MAINROADS participants arrived on the near west side for a hands-on demonstration of assistive technology, a visit to a Computer Training Program for people with disabilities, and culminating in a social event on the University of Illinois campus.

Darrell, a student with mild mental retardation and a visual impairment, arrived late after being dropped off by a relative. After the exploration, Darrell's mother called to notify him that his aunt was unavailable to pick him up. His mentor escorted him home on public transportation, using route information which Darrell, himself, provided. This experience convinced Darrell's mother to allow him to travel independently to MAINROADS events. In fact, Darrell traveled by himself to the FRCD office for the next exploration to a suburban shopping mall to explore careers in retailing, mall management, and the food service industry. Even though Darrell arrived late and missed the group's departure, he used the activity flyer and traveled independently to the subway stop which was the boarding site for the group's travel to the suburbs. After finding that the MAINROADS group had left, he called his mother from the station and returned home independently.

MAINROADS provides direct experiences to youth, and encourages family support and participation in the transition process. Families are invited to participate in project activities, if invited by their child, and all information is sent to the home under both the youth and parent/guardian names.

Several parents, who initially had concerns about their child's capacity to participate and benefit from the project activities, now recognize the competen-

cies and independence their children have demonstrated during their months with MAINROADS, and support their child's emerging skills for adulthood.

Nick is a student with a learning disability and visual impairment. Both parents are legally blind. Nick's father was initially apprehensive about allowing his son to participate. When staff mentors arrived at his house for the intake interview, Nick's father was waiting at the door, having been alerted to their arrival by neighbors who maintained a walkie-talkie relay system to notify each other when strangers entered their community from the train station several blocks away. Still protective, Nick's father accompanied his son on his first exploration, which affirmed the father's confidence in the project. Now Nick travels to MAINROADS independently. His father continues to enjoy the opportunity to meet with the parents of Nick's partners during follow-up activity planning meetings, and to mentor them by providing a variety of resources and support.

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

Peer and staff mentoring and close collaboration with other organizations, agencies and service providers, are important and unique components of the project.

Peer mentoring is continuously available through monthly group activities and regular meetings between partners, with staff mentors, in home communities. Because of the diversity of the MAINROADS participants, a peer support network of youth with and without disabilities from areas throughout the city has developed, as they pool their many skills, attributes and interests, to pursue common goals for the future.

During a recent overnight trip to visit college campuses outside the Chicago area, participants had a chance to spend the night in a dormitory, sharing a room with their partner. Some of the students with disabilities, who had previously been reticent in group situations, emerged as group leaders. For example, one of the participants with speech/language deficits, conversed with a hearing impaired youth using sign language learned at school. Not only did her general education counterparts ask her to interpret for them, but they also asked her to instruct them in sign, which engaged them for the remainder of the bus trip home.

Margaret, a general education student, and Edith, who has peripheral neuropathy, go to different schools, and are partners who have become close friends. When Margaret was unable to secure a space in a Driver's Education class at her own school,

Multiple routes can be taken to reach the same destination, which are self-determined based on unique needs, preferences and interests

Edith, who has a job in the Driver's Education Program at her school, was able to enroll her partner. Margaret appreciated the opportunity to learn driving skills using adapted vehicles, since her career goal is to be a physical therapist.

Through mentoring by staff who are community members and persons with disabilities or parents of adolescents/youth with disabilities, participants journey toward their goals.

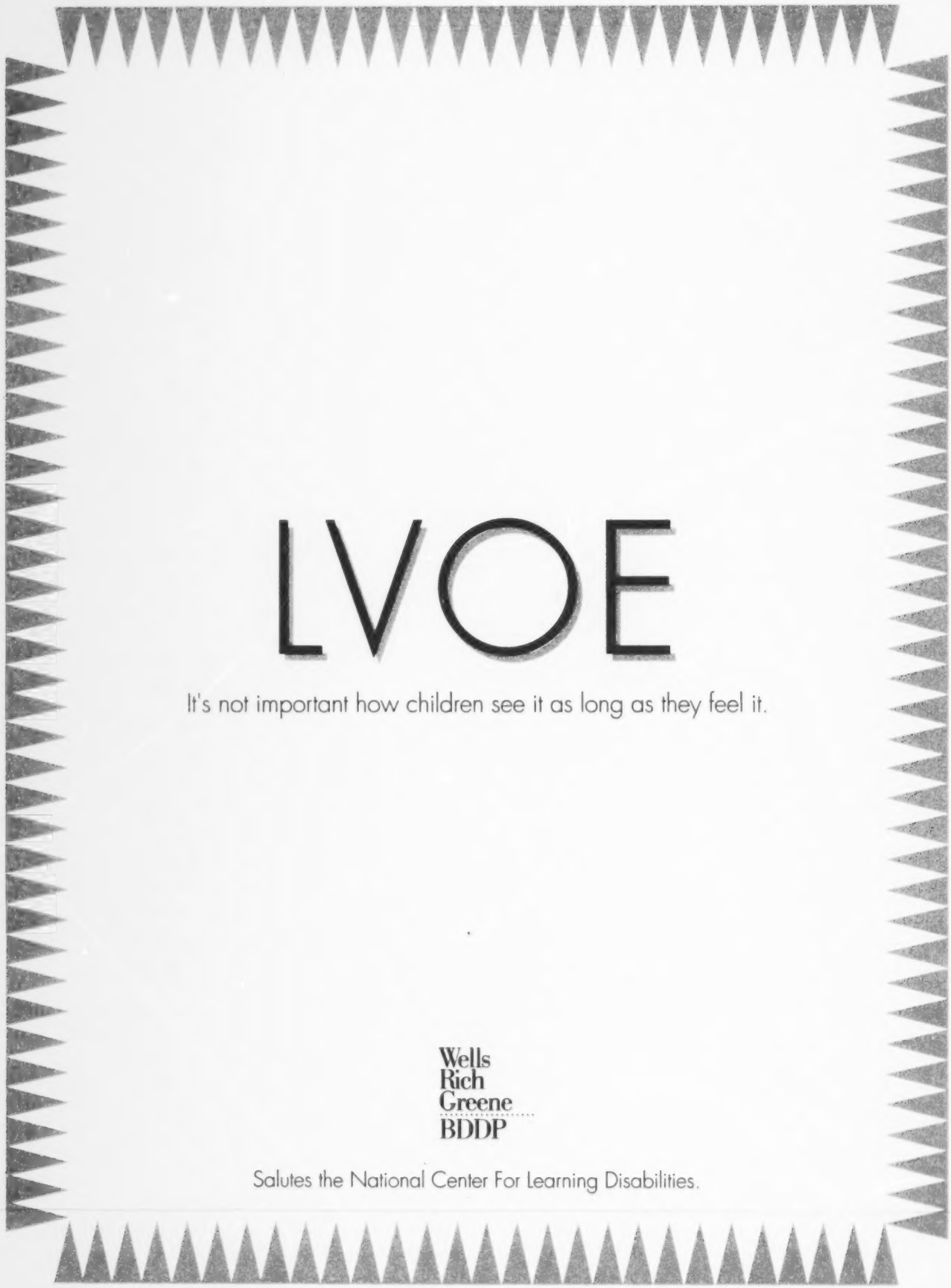
Jackie, a student with emotional disorders, is considering a career as an office worker. To help her make this decision, she indicated her interest and availability to volunteer in an office environment. By working with her staff mentor, Jackie has made arrangements to volunteer with two different temporary agencies to gain the competency she needs to make an important career decision.

To increase participants' community networking opportunities, project collaborators who have co-presented workshops and provided on-site visits include: public transportation providers; rehabilitation professionals; admissions/ special needs/financial aid personnel, professors and students from colleges and universities; general managers, supervisors, security and floor personnel from the retail and food service industries; professionals from the Center for Independent Living and the City Department of Housing. One of the parents, a minority, small business owner, facilitated a workshop on entrepreneurship.

THE FINAL DESTINATION

Over the next eighteen months, project youth will continue to travel the MAINROADS, mentored by each other and the staff, and supported by their families. Checkpoints along the final leg of their journey will include a visit to another large employment site which offers a variety of degree and non-degree career opportunities; travels to the offices of major municipal and state agencies providing services to its citizens; a trip to the state capital to advocate for positive legislative change; and development of videos and public speaking skills to retrace their own route as mentors for younger high school students who are preparing for the future. Armed with powerful resumes they will build and develop, and letters of recommendation from project staff, MAINROADS youth will progress upon their own paths to employment or continuing education after graduation, having used the assertiveness, networking, advocacy, decision making and socialization skills to plan the route, identify the checkpoints, and access roadside assistance, as needed, to become independent adult members of their community. ■

Editor's Note: For more information about the MAINROADS Project, including a full description of the activities, please contact Kathryn Moery, Project Coordinator of MAINROADS, or Tammy Diakogeorgiou, Family Resource Center on Disabilities, 20 East Jackson, Room 900, Chicago, Illinois 60605, 312-939-3513.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Salutes the National Center For Learning Disabilities.

RECORDING FOR THE BLIND: EXPANDED HORIZONS

BY WILLIAM ELLIS

FEATURES 6

Industrious and humane. Solid and comfortable. Remarkable and efficient. These are a few of the words which come to mind when you enter the highly accomplished world of the Recording for the Blind in Princeton, New Jersey. Well over one half of their activity is now dedicated to the needs of individuals with learning disabilities. All of their attention is paid to the highest standards of efficiency and response possible.

When you enter the building you know it is a special place. Built around an older core building it rambles off into cozy yet spacious stations for administering, recording, distributing, billing, cataloguing, taking orders, meeting requests, raising money. These activities take skill and often ingenuity. Both are in abundance in this place. Witness the computer directed moving track which transports its cargo of white (immediate fulfillment) bags and blue ones (not so urgent), all meeting the needs of the thousands in the U.S. and abroad who call on the taping and other services of the Recording for the Blind.

Access to the written word is a major pathway to the very fulfillment of life itself. The message was abundantly clear to founder Anne T. Macdonald as she observed blinded veterans of World War II trying to access the opportunities afforded them by the GI Bill of Rights. The written word could and did come to them in a form which doesn't necessarily involve the use of vision. Such a simple thought, put the books on audio tape, created a product which now, all these years later, has a direct and regular impact on close to 40,000 individuals.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE AND HEAR WRITTEN MATERIAL

And, as with all good ideas, it was not long before others could see the value of the concept for their need. Other blind individuals or people who were not physically capable of turning the page of a text book saw clear potential for their own use, expanding the base of individuals who were able to benefit from this well conceived and soon very popular service. The enactment of PL 94-142 added to the demand. Many children with learning disabilities, acknowledged finally in an official way as a population worthy of the protection of the law, soon saw the potential support for their own needs. Many children found that the opportunity to both hear and see their reading material simultaneously was a major step forward in their own development as readers and learners. Many young people today can testify to the fact that they read their first book as a result of the combined sound and sight stimulus provided by the Recording for the Blind. Today, individuals with learning disabilities comprise the largest client and growth area for the organization. They value the independence which the approach brings them.

THE LEARNING THROUGH LISTENING AWARD

The beneficial effects of the relationship between the Recording for the Blind and individuals with learning disabilities are often best seen at the

organization's awards dinner held annually in New York City. The Learning Through Listening Award is the first national award established exclusively for high school seniors with learning disabilities. It recognizes "extraordinary leadership, scholarship, enterprise, and service to others." The 1994 recipient Nathan Stooke, who graduated first in his class with a 4.0 average, is representative of the caliber of student who has been recognized. This is what the Recording for the Blind has meant to him:

"As a member of a military family, [I] had the opportunity to see most of the United States. My most important hobby is swimming. During high school, I was on a U.S. year-round swim team and practiced before and after school for four hours a day with an additional two hours of driving. This rigorous swimming schedule has taught me how to manage my time, so I can succeed in both the pool and at school. The discipline I have learned from swimming has made it easier for me not to procrastinate.

"Before I started using RFB, my life consisted of doing school work, swimming, sleeping, and eating. My mother used to read all of my books to me which left little time for (my) brothers and put a strain on the family. Now I can listen to my books while I drive to and from swimming and have time for my other homework and my computer. With the independence I have acquired from my books being on tape, I can attend college without having to worry about who is going to read my books to me."

IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERS

The books are recorded by volunteers (over 4,000 volunteers assist in RFB's work). Knowing the importance of the accuracy and clarity of the reading and recording, they willingly and cheerfully submit to rigorous training, taking great pride in their work. And it isn't just the reading. Many text books contain intricate drawings and diagrams, all of which must be conveyed with great accuracy to the listener. So, the volunteer readers have to be knowledgeable about the topics of the texts they read. There are 30 recording studios around the country, recording texts and other materials on demand and the RFB has now accrued a library of 80,000 master tapes, housed in its Princeton facility.

THE E-TEXT SYSTEM

Recording for the Blind has been on the forefront of technological advances in meeting the needs of the print disabled. Computer technology has been embraced wholeheartedly and has now become a major aspect of the organization's work. Notably its E-Text System is enjoying considerable popularity and growth. The system permits the placement of books onto a "computer disk, either by scanning the text or borrowing the publisher's source file. Books can then be accessed on a personal computer with adaptive equipment for speech synthesis, braille, or large print." While the application of the E-Text has been mostly embraced by the blind, it clearly has important potential for some levels of learning disabilities.

INFORMATION ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

The costs of the entire operation are considerable (over $22 million in fiscal year 1992-93). These are largely born through private donations and donated services (close to 70% of the entire operating budget). While government funding under contracts does bring some assistance, the majority of

Many children found that the opportunity to both hear and see their reading material simultaneously was a major step forward in their own development as readers and learners

the financial stability of the institution comes from the outstanding fund raising efforts of the volunteer Board of Directors and a dynamic professional staff under the very able leadership of RFB's President and CEO, Ritchie Geisel. Geisel has articulated a vision, as he puts it in the RFB's 1993 Annual Report, of "a society in which all individuals have access to information in a medium best suited to their needs with the same timeliness and availability as standard print..." What he doesn't go on to say is that the funding efforts of the RFB enable the services to be entirely accessible to just about everyone in terms of their personal expenses. A one time, life time registration fee of $37.50 gains the individual access to the RFB's lending and recording services. The E-Text is available for purchase.

SPREADING THE WORK THROUGH COLLABORATION

Looking to its future, the Recording for the Blind is involved in strategic planning, broadening its mission, getting itself ready for the next century. Already establishing broad based collaborations with organizations such as the Association for Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) and the Association of American Publishers, RFB is hoping to expand its work into many more partnerships which will acknowledge the importance of the reading process well beyond the early reading, to graduate level course work which now forms the largest part of RFB's work. The growing need to reach out into the other domains of life, such as the workplace, suggests that there will be ever expanding horizons for RFB. It plans to develop the nation's first national repository for the "collection, central storage, distribution, and administration of publishers' source files, which will be converted to media accessible to students with print disabilities."

The work being developed for the future, and the means of paying for it are enormously ambitious. But the track record of Recording for the Blind is outstanding and its need suggests itself from the ever increasing demand. The fact that the institution has so gracefully and effectively expanded its work to provide for a large group of individuals with learning disabilities speaks to its innovativeness and its flexibility, two traits which will serve it well in the future. And Recording for the Blind has, from its humble beginnings, always thought BIG. As one enters the headquarters building one is immediately impressed by the string of large photographs in the hallway showing Award recipients meeting every President since President Eisenhower. Going, as it were, right to the top! And that is the spirit which continues to imbue this very worthy endeavor. May it long continue. ■

Editor's Note: This article was prepared with the help of Recording for the Blind's very effective and comprehensive information packet. Individuals who would like to know more about the services of RFB may call (609) 452-8567.

THE BRIDGE NOT CROSSED

BY PASQUALE ACCARDO, M.D.

A mother brought her eighteen month old child to the physician because he was not talking. The pediatrician reassured her that it was just a phase that he would outgrow. When he still wasn't talking at two years of age, she again brought it to the physician's attention. Even though he again tried to reassure her that nothing was wrong with the child, she took the child to an early childhood program. They evaluated the child's speech and language and found him to be severely delayed.

After a year of intensive therapy, he had made very little progress. At the therapists' suggestion, the concerned mother brought him back to the pediatrician. When he attempted to again reassure her that there was nothing wrong with the child, she went to another pediatrician who quickly referred the child to a Developmental Pediatrics clinic. At three years two months of age he was found to be moderately mentally retarded and dysmorphic, and chromosomes were drawn. These demonstrated a rare genetic disorder for which the mother was then identified as a carrier.

Despite the fact that this child was identified very early on by his mother and received available therapy, there was a serious delay in discovering both the severity and medical specificity of his disorder. That significance only becomes apparent when one understands that at the time this genetic diagnosis was finally confirmed, the child's mother was almost three months pregnant. Amniocentesis documented a genetically normal fetus, but the entire system had come perilously close to disaster.

The concept of the continuum of developmental disorders understands conditions such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism, language disorders, learning disabilities and attentional deficits as all occupying a common spectrum. Thus many causes of mental retardation can also cause learning disabilities; these include, for example, fetal alcohol syndrome, fragile X syndrome, and Prader Willi syndrome. These conditions all have significant prevention and counseling aspects; they, along with many other medical diagnoses, need to be seriously considered and carefully excluded in the physician component of the evaluation of a child with a learning disability.

THE LIMITATIONS OF IN-SCHOOL MEDICAL SCREENING

Children enrolled in special education classes have all received a multidisciplinary team assessment that almost always includes vision and hearing screening and often includes a health history and a physical examination by a nurse (school nurse or pediatric nurse practitioner). The limitations of such medical screening should become apparent if one considers that the very identification of a student as, for example, learning disabled, implies the possibility of a whole spectrum of neurodevelopmental etiologies and associated dysfunctions, and all of these- at a prevalence rate well above that of the general population.

The medical assessment that can help clarify the etiology of a learning disability is not one that can be provided by school-based health clinics or nurses. It has more of a subspecialty orientation although it can be performed by the pediatric generalist. Although not every physician feels comfortable with assessing children with learning disabilities, more and more state chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics are compiling directories of those pedi-

Patient care could probably be more dramatically improved by the application of what we already know than by many of the most current breakthroughs which will receive clinical application only over the next several decades

atricians with special competence and interest in the area.

With regard to their medical care, children enrolled in special education services can be divided into three groups:

(1) those children with learning disabilities who have no routine source of medical care (no "medical home") except for emergency room visits;

(2) those children with learning disabilities who do have as an identified source of continuity of medical care either a pediatrician or a family practitioner, but this physician has (a) little interest or skill in exploring the presence, etiology, and associated dysfunctions of a possible developmental disability, and (b) no interest or knowledge in referring the child with a learning disability to an appropriate physician for such an assessment; and,

(3) those children with learning disabilities who do have either a pediatrician or a family practitioner with both interest and skill in exploring the presence, etiology, and associated dysfunctions of a possible developmental disability, or who will refer such a child to another physician for such an assessment.

INSURANCE LOOPHOLES TO DENY COVERAGE

The percentage of children in each of these categories will vary with the particular community. But even those children with learning disabilities who fall into category three will not necessarily receive an appropriate medical evaluation because often their health insurance will deny coverage for such a developmental assessment for a variety of reasons:

(1) the presence of learning disorders and attentional deficits in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-Fourth Edition (DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994) indicates that they are "mental" problems that are frequently not covered by many policies;

(2) the learning disorders and attentional deficits are preexisting conditions either because the child was born with the problem or because the family's insurance carrier was recently changed;

(3) an "equivalent" diagnostic evaluation is available without charge through the public school system; or,

(4) since the conditions that might be diagnosed probably cannot be completely cured within a specific fixed time period, such "incurable" conditions are excluded from coverage. The overlapping and co-occurrence of attentional disorders with learning disabilities actually serves to increase the diagnostic confusion and give insurance companies more loopholes to deny coverage.

THE GUILT WHICH ACCOMPANIES A LEARNING DISABILITY

Apart from the need to identify any specific medical etiology, there is also the medical necessity to inform the parents as to the absence of any specifically identifiable medical etiology. While there is much dramatic medical progress along the lines of genetic localization studies and neuroradiological findings, there remains a great deal that the developmental pediatrician can contribute to the parental understanding of a child's learning disability outside these more esoteric research areas. As in many other

fields of medicine, patient care could probably be more dramatically improved by the application of what we already know than by many of the more current breakthroughs which will receive clinical application only over the next several decades. Parents need to hear the extent to which the neurological foundation of their child's learning disability can be reasonably identified with current procedures in order to adequately relieve both them and their child of the guilt that always accompanies a learning disability.

Popular information on child rearing plays on parental insecurities to generate tremendous feelings of guilt. Books, newspaper columns and magazine articles, along with radio and television broadcasts all suggest to mothers that if they identify a suitable father, avoid alcohol and drugs—whether illegal, prescription or over the counter—during the pregnancy, take vitamin and mineral supplements, religiously watch their weight and their diet, undergo natural childbirth with no anesthesia, room in with the baby and breast feed for the first several years of life, purchase the most expensive cognition enhancing toys, never raise their voice or hand to the child, prepare the baby's food from natural substances, get their child into the right preschool, avoid excess sweets and soft drinks with harmful additives, and, of course, stay home from work until the child is ready to go off to college, that if they do all of this, then their child will be perfect.

As soon as it becomes unavoidably apparent that the child is experiencing difficulties in school, there are only two immediate possibilities: mother has been derelict in following the recipe for perfection or the teacher is incompetent. Here again, parents by their very nature almost immediately assume teacher competence, take the blame on themselves, and seek out all sorts of remediations that basically place the burden of the learning disability on the family. For example, they will spend hours every night on homework or hire a private tutor, all the while egged on by the guilt that they must have neglected some integral component of good child rearing since the outcome—a learning problem—proves beyond the shadow of a doubt their insufficient willingness to sacrifice for their child.

Even when the learning disability is correctly identified by an interdisciplinary team, the diagnostic formulation by the school professionals is often interpreted to the parents in such a way as to neutralize any etiological implications. When parents are told that their child has a learning disability, it is often explained to them as a simple discrepancy between ability (intelligence level) and achievement (grade level) that will be treated by specialized educational intervention. This leaves the parents puzzled as to just how this discrepancy came about. They are again forced back to the two choices that either the school teacher or they themselves must have done something wrong. Since their child is not mentally retarded but can learn, then there must be some malicious willful quirk that is inhibiting learning and for which they must in some unknown way be responsible. They may view special education services as a punishment for their failure and will then expend much time and energy arguing against their child's being stigmatized by such treatment. Early on they may want the least possible amount of services rather than the optimal amount.

Popular information on child rearing plays on parental insecurities to generate tremendous feelings of guilt

LD IS A BRAIN, NOT A MIND, PROBLEM

The answer that can effectively relieve this anxiety and guilt can only come from a comprehensive neurodevelopmental assessment by a pediatrician, developmental pediatrician, or child neurologist. To the extent that the answer to the question WHY can ever be deflected from the parents themselves, such an answer must come from the medical component of the examination. A learning disability is a brain (that is, a neurological) rather than a mind (that is, an emotional or motivational) problem. It is almost impossible to underestimate the weight that can be taken off the parent's shoulders by such an assessment. The results of such medical counseling can effectively prevent the paralysis often induced by parental guilt. It can allow parents easier access to all the energy that they will need over the long haul to negotiate with the school and other community resources to optimize their child's habilitation.

Old timers remember an age when schools and pediatricians worked closely together. In recent years, the pressures of busy practices on the part of pediatricians and concerns about liability to pay for medical assessments on the part of schools have driven the two apart. This is especially unfortunate since at the present time developmental pediatrics—without at all presuming any special competence in the classroom—has a great deal to offer both the child with a learning disability as well as the discipline of education.

Children with learning disabilities are special health care needs children and as such are entitled to appropriate specialized pediatric medical services. The impetus provided by the recognition of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder as a developmental disability will hopefully provide a working model for more positive future collaboration between Special Education and Developmental Pediatrics to the benefit of children with learning disabilities and their families. ■

Editor's Note: Dr. Pasquale Accardo is the Professor of Pediatrics at St. Louis University Health Sciences Center, and the Director of The Knights of Columbus Developmental Center at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. References for this article are available from NCLD.

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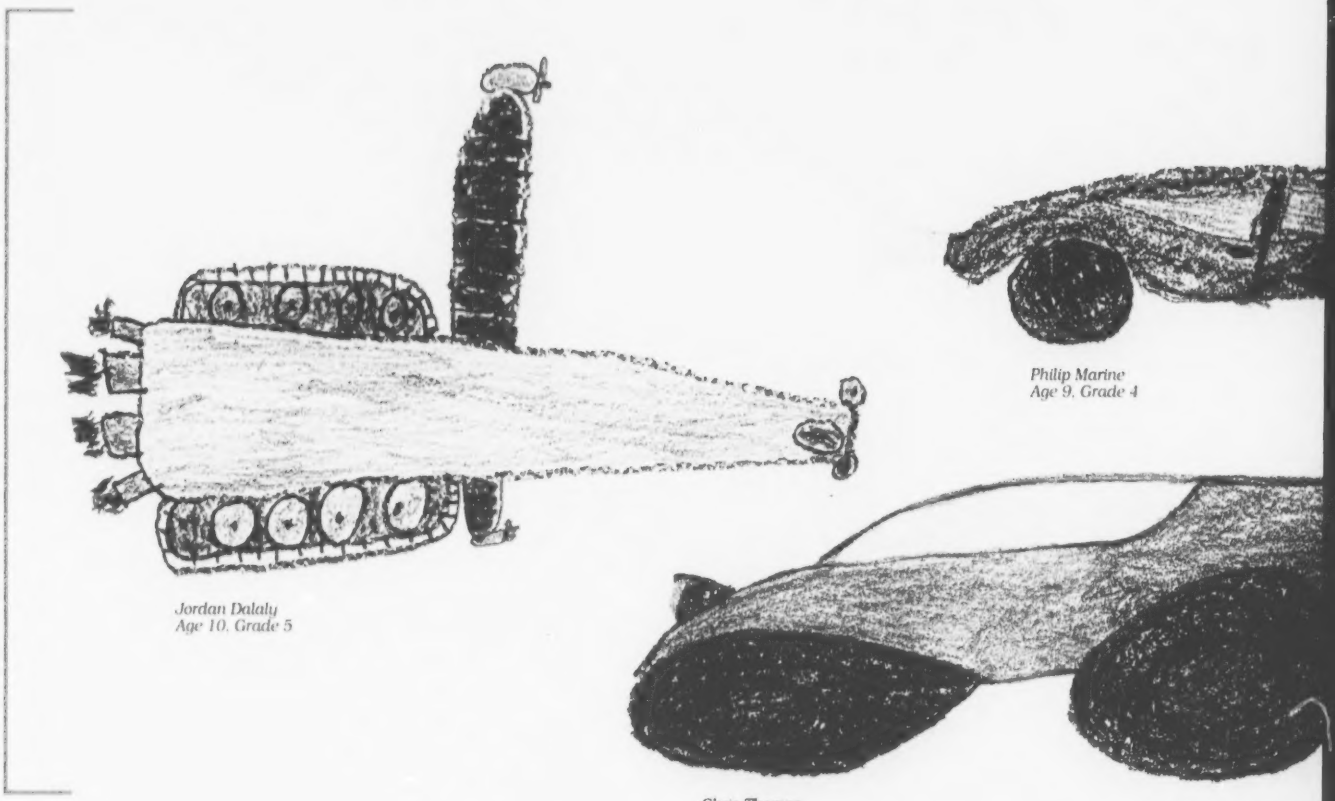
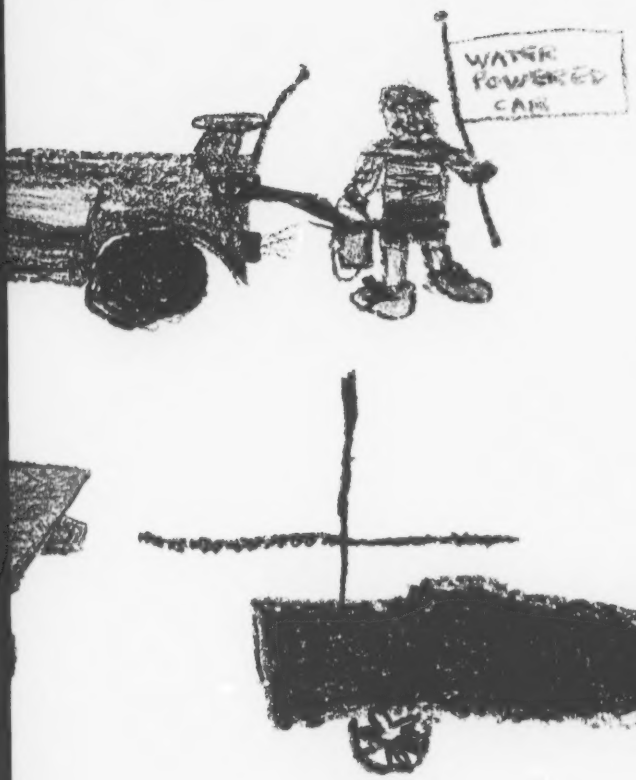
Dreamers today. Innovators tomorrow.



Jordan Dalaly
Age 10, Grade 5

Philip Marine
Age 9, Grade 4

Chris Thomas
Age 8, Grade 3/4



Adam Garfield-Turner
Age 11, Grade 5

Matthew Van Every
Age 11, Grade 5

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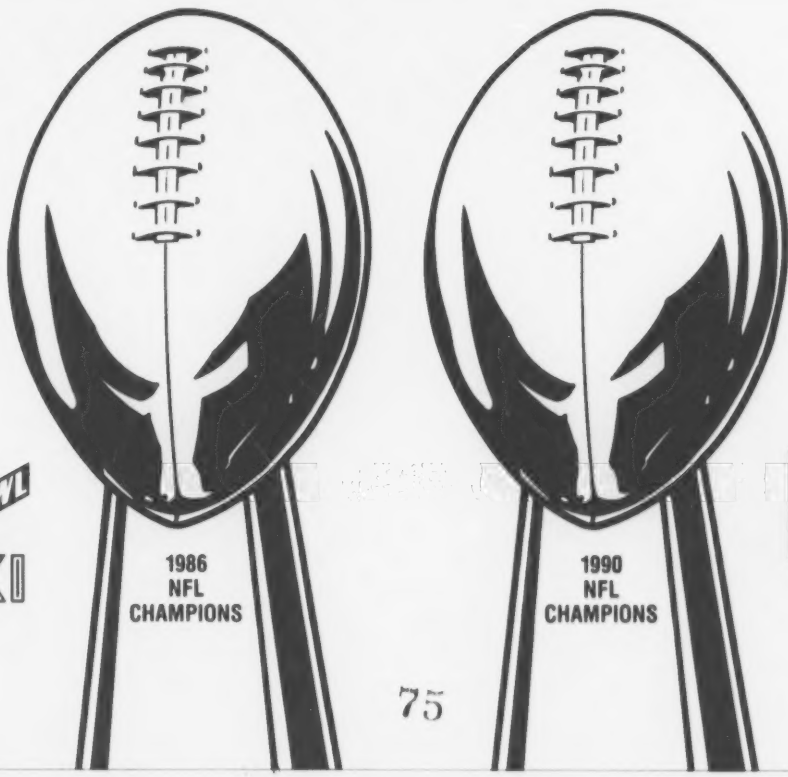
Ford

The artwork on these two pages is totally original and was done by some very special young people. They are all students at Eton Academy in Birmingham, Michigan. The Eton Academy is the only independent school for children with specific learning disabilities in the state of Michigan.

The New York Football Giants Salute The National Center for Learning Disabilities

NEW YORK GIANTS



SUPER BOWL XXI

SUPER BOWL XXV

CHOOSING A SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

BY PHYLLIS CHMURA

SCHOOLING 7

Choosing a school for students with special needs can be a frustrating task because schools vary widely in degree of specialization, philosophy of education, and in the types of students that they serve. Students have different learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses. In the case of emotionally, behaviorally impaired, and learning disabled adolescents, the school is often chosen in the midst of a crisis. Unfortunately, the support system that might ordinarily be relied upon—school personnel, therapists, teachers, the court system, friends, or relatives—are often hopelessly uninformed.

At one end of the spectrum are the more traditional independent schools, which, in addition to providing a standard college preparatory curriculum, offer remedial help in one or more areas and a higher level of counseling to students who need closer monitoring. At the other extreme, are the highly specialized schools that address the needs of students whose difficulties are very pronounced and who are unable to deal with the everyday demands of reality. Their specific emotional and behavioral difficulties require almost a hospital setting.

Ideally, before beginning the search for the appropriate school, parents should have a clear understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses. The child's deficient academic progress could be due to behavioral or emotional problems or could be because of an undiagnosed learning disability. Parents should be unrelenting in finding competent professionals in the education and mental health fields and have their child evaluated.

One area that seems particularly hard to diagnose is the gifted, learning disabled student. The combination of learning disability and giftedness can have disastrous consequences because the gifted child is smart enough to compensate for the learning disability, making it difficult to diagnose. In some states, if the student is not performing two full years below grade level, he is not eligible for special assistance in public schools. Bright, learning disabled students seem to be at particular risk for behavior problems.

GUIDELINES

Once the student's difficulties have been identified, there are some guidelines which parents and professionals should consider in selecting the school that addresses the student's needs while maintaining the family values.

Visits

It is important to actually visit the schools that you are considering. Before visiting, make a list of questions that are important to you. Visit at least six schools before making a decision; no more than two per day. This allows enough time to digest what you have learned and to evaluate each experience. Make it a point to be there when classes are in session, not in the late afternoon or on vacation days. Be sure to take notes.

Be attentive to whether the school is basically clean and in good repair. Notice if people are friendly; not just the admissions officer and the student guide, but the dishwasher, the students, and the teachers. Does the staff seem content with what they are doing?

If you take a campus tour with a student guide,

ask him/her for information. Know enough about the school to ask direct and pertinent questions. The student's answers to the following questions can be very informative: "Why did you come to this particular school?" "How are you doing here?" "What are the school's strengths and weaknesses?" "Is the faculty accessible to you?"

Headmasters

Schools are people, not buildings. Meeting the headmaster is essential because he sets the tone of the school. His value system decides policy, his educational background determines courses of study, his personality colors the entire program. His visible presence is essential to a well-run school.

It's important to know how long the headmaster has been with the school. If he has recently taken over leadership, it is important to know if his program represents a major change in school philosophy or has resulted in a significant change in staff. If there has been a recent change in headmasters, it is important for you to understand the circumstances that led to the change.

It's a good idea to understand the terms used by professionals to describe the students they serve. Headmasters are sensitive about how their school programs and the composition of the student body are perceived. The schools are in competition for new enrollments, but they don't want to attract students that they are not equipped to handle. Consequently, it is important to understand the educational jargon. Some terms you might encounter are: emotionally impaired, behaviorally impaired, emotionally disturbed, hard to place, developmentally disabled, learning disabled, learning different, under-achievers, behaviorally difficult, emotionally troubled, acting out, and environmentally confused. Ask the headmaster to define his terminology to avoid miscommunication.

An important thing to know, and one that is hard to discern is: How is school policy set? Is there a policy in place with an underlying philosophy that would remain the same if the head person were replaced, or is policy set by one person? In other words, beware of cult-like leadership.

Assessment Procedures for Admissions

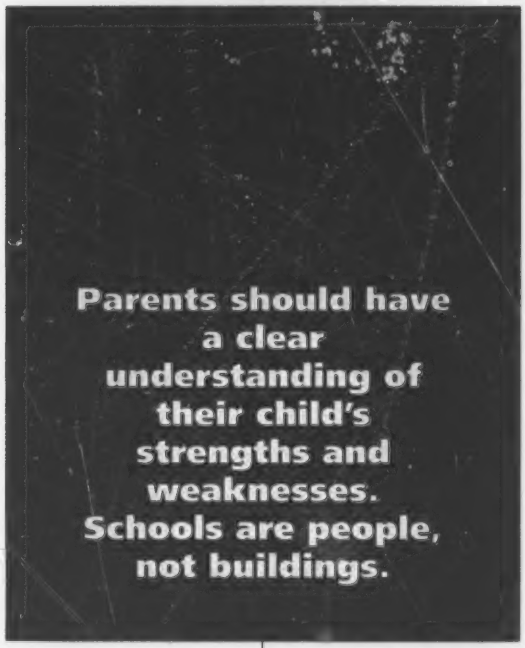
What types of assessments are done routinely at the school? If personnel on staff do the assessing, what are their qualifications? How are assessment results integrated into the educational services and the type of instruction a child receives?

Staff

What are the qualifications of the teachers? Are there specialists for different content areas (i.e., science, reading, computers, art, health, physical education)? What type of ongoing staff training and development takes place? How long do most staff members stay at the school? Where do most staff members go after leaving? What medical staff and/or support are available at the school? If a student is diagnosed with ADD or ADHD is there someone on staff who can oversee his medication?

Vital Statistics

Size of the school is important. How many students are enrolled? How many boys? How many girls? How many are day students? How many are boarding students? What is the student/teacher ratio? How large are the classes? What is the age-range of the student body? How long do most students stay at



the school? What is the IQ range of the current student body? What is the median IQ?

Costs

How much does it cost to attend the school for the entire year? You must ask very direct questions since some schools, in addition to the basic cost, require students to participate in expensive activities. Some of these extra items could be: occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, counseling, tutoring, special sports programs, extra-curricular activities, and travel which the school requires. What financial aid is available?

Year Round Program

Is the school open 365 days per year and is the program continuous throughout the year? A key question is whether participation in the summer program is mandatory. This information provides a clue as to where this particular school fits into the continuum of schools, whether its primary objective is to address academic needs or emotional needs.

Location

Location of the school is an important consideration because it affects a large number of other factors. Location determines travel costs and could restrict your visits to the school and your personal contact with your child. The proximity to cities determines cultural activities and life style. Some schools have a wilderness setting, some are situated on remote islands. The climate at the location determines the types of extra-curricular activities in which your child will be involved. In the case of behavior problems, the attitude of the local police department should be investigated as their cooperation is sometimes needed with an acting-out teen who might run away.

Academic Emphasis

The emphasis on academics varies significantly between schools. Some schools believe that the primary emphasis should be on behavior improvement and treat academics as secondary. Others have a very structured and demanding academic program and address behavior and emotional growth within that framework. Ask yourself what is unique about the program at the school? Some schools specialize in working with learning disabled students and have been successful in modifying behavior by structuring an academic program which allows the student to demonstrate his full potential. For dyslexic students, is the remediation program multisensory and based on the Orton/Gillingham phonics approach? Are the services "pull-out" vs. remedial and is special help given in the classroom? How are records kept and dispersed regarding general progress? Is the learning environment enriched and does it include exposure to lectures, concerts, art, and physical education?

Graduation Requirements

Another important consideration which separates schools is the requirement for graduation. The emphasis can be on improving academic skills or on correcting behavior, or resolving an emotional difficulty and returning the student to the conventional public or private school setting. Some schools expect the student to graduate both academically and emotion-

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ally. If that is the case, graduation will not be in any particular time frame, but when the staff and the peer group decide the student is ready to graduate. By understanding graduation requirements, you can get a better assessment of how long your child will be at the school. Has the school kept a record of students who have attended the school? Is there any tracking after they leave? Where do students go who leave before graduating? Where do they go after graduating? Is there help available for making the transition from the school to other schools or employment?

Values

Since your child may have limited contact with your family while at school, it is important to select a school that practices a value system similar to yours. The definition of normal behavior varies at different schools. Items such as church attendance, handling of money, and the policy regarding smoking should be investigated.

It isn't enough to inquire if the students can attend religious services, if that is important to you. Ask where the church or temple of your choice is located, if transportation is provided, and if other students or faculty members attend regularly. Does the school encourage attendance or only tolerate it?

Parental Involvement

What opportunities are available for parents to become involved in the school? Is family therapy available and encouraged? Are supervised and unsupervised parent/child meetings encouraged? What are the school's rules regarding telephone contact and parental visits? If the school is located a distance away from the family's home town, are parent support groups organized? Is attendance mandatory? What regular communication takes place between parents and teachers, parents and specialists, parents and administrators?

Funding

A determination of how the school is funded is important. Schools funded privately can be much more flexible and geared toward the specific needs of the current student body. Conversely, if the program is totally funded with public funds, it typically is structured to conform to local school restrictions. If the school is funded by both private and public money, the rules and regulations of public administrators will tend to heavily influence school policy.

Expulsion Policy

If the primary reason for selecting a school is due to a breakdown in the relationship between the child and the family that resulted in his acting out, the school policy regarding expulsion is of importance. In some cases, if a child acts out inappropriately, after the first or second offense, he is asked to leave the school. Other schools are structured to address the acting out child, and expel students only under the most extreme circumstances.

Discipline

On campuses where there is a program to deal with acting out students, very specific questions should be asked about how the school handles inappropriate behavior. For instance, if your child has acted out by using alcohol, your question should be, "What happens when a student is caught drinking on campus?" A follow-up question might be, "What actions do you take to modify this specific behavior?" Is AA a part of the program?

In the case of a learning difficulty, it's ideal to have the child placed early, before serious emotional problems develop

CONCLUSIONS

During the last ten years, the field of education has improved in the identification of students who require special programs. The large variety of private schools available covers the entire spectrum of requirements. The challenge to the parents is to find the right one for their child.

The reason for sending a child to an independent school is to allow him to grow in an atmosphere that will let him breathe and feel good about himself. When a decision has been made and admission is being sought, parents are well advised to be honest and candid with the admissions officer about the strengths and weaknesses of their child. Some families are reluctant to admit that their child is learning disabled or in therapy, or has a medical problem. If this information is withheld, the student might not be properly matched to a school, or there could be a delay in the school structuring a program to meet his emotional and educational needs.

Because the procedure is complex and time consuming, it would be most ideal to discover what your child's specific needs are, and to be able to look for a school before the family is in a crisis. In the case of a learning difficulty, it's ideal to have the child placed early, before serious emotional problems develop.

Looking at the available literature assists in conducting a preliminary search and narrowing the alternatives to a manageable number. It's imperative that you visit each of the school campuses and talk with the headmaster and other school personnel. Proper preparation could help you ask the right questions during your school visits so you will have enough information to select an appropriate school. ■

Editor's Note: Phyllis Chmura is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, Dearborn, in Sociology. She and her husband struggled to find an appropriate setting for their own son, who is gifted and learning disabled.

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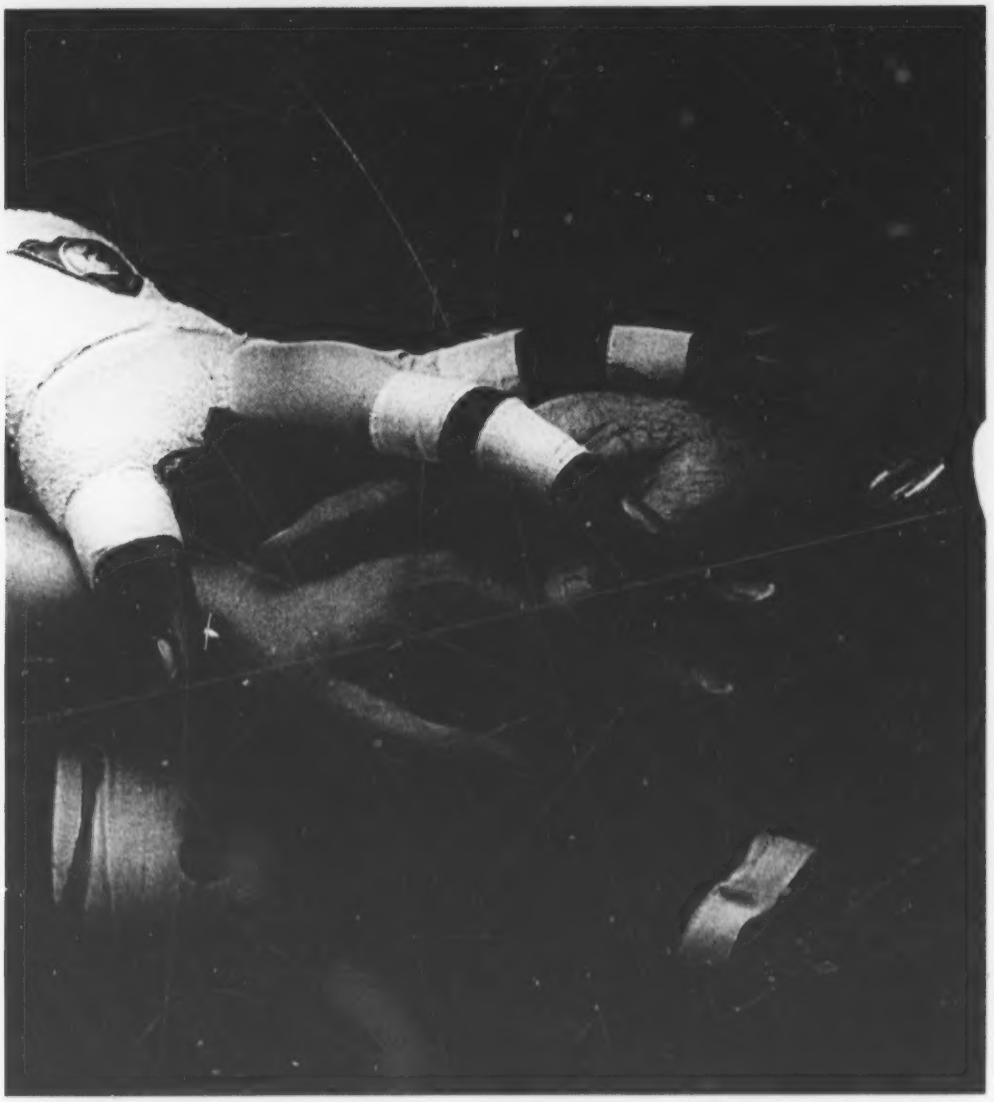

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IT'S REALLY NOT SUCH A BAD WAY TO GO

BY JOAN B. HATHAWAY

Their World...what is their world? Is it a world that others cannot enter? If so, why is that? After all what's so special about the world of the learning disabled, the dyslexic, the individual with an attention deficit disorder?

"HE NOW HAS A LIFE"

One parent expresses, "My fourteen year old son, Patrick, was diagnosed as being dyslexic with an attention deficit disorder at the age of thirteen. His first seven years in the public educational system were a nightmare! His grades were never consistent and even when he received an A, he had no idea how or why he'd gotten it. Of greatest concern, however, was his steady downward spiral. I could not risk the final stage of this downward spiral and have him move into crime and violence or severe depression and suicide.

"After we'd placed Patrick in a small Christian school, we were delighted to see the beginnings of a reversal in the downward path he'd been on for so long. Loving teachers helped him feel good about himself and, as a result, his behavior and academic effort improved markedly. So, when, without previous warning, on Patrick's thirteenth birthday, I was handed a letter that stated I should not return him to school following the Easter vacation because it was obvious that he would never be able to keep up with the outlined academic standards of the academy, I was shocked and dismayed. It was at this time that we first heard from a concerned and equally shocked teacher that Patrick might be learning disabled. All during elementary school Patrick had standardized test scores in the 96-98 percentiles and had been in the program for the academically gifted. The wild fluctuations in his grades and behavior were always attributed to his 'laziness' and refusal to 'buckle down and get serious about learning.'

"From the point of diagnosis, all of our lives began to change. Despite the battle scars we still bore, we began to feel a real sense of hope for the first time. I read everything I could about dyslexia and ADD and found that labels like lazy, undisciplined, antisocial, emotionally unstable, insensitive, and uncontrollable were commonly placed on undiagnosed children with learning disabilities. It is almost impossible to describe the profound sense of despair that I felt as a mother, when I realized I was probably the only person in the world who believed and knew that Patrick was truly a very sensitive, gentle, and loving child who'd always possessed a definite excitement for learning.

"I have now passed the one year mark in being a parent of an officially diagnosed child with a learning disability. I continue to marvel at how well my child survived eight years of feeling like a failure because he didn't perceive and process information in the same way that the majority of children do. Patrick has been a student at Sandhills Academy for one year.

"I am almost overwhelmed at how beautifully he has progressed, and of course, I shall never cease being grateful that Patrick now has a life. Over the past year, I was able to watch my child become whole again, and now when I hear his teachers describe him with words like: loving, hardworking, meticulous,sensitive, brilliant, always willing to help others and even delightful, I'm almost tempted to ask someone to pinch me just to make sure I'm not just dreaming.

"In just one year Patrick has traveled back up

from that downward spiral and in many ways I've joined him in the healing process. As I've attended PTO meetings, parent education conferences and parent support groups at Sandhills, I've realized that most parents of learning disabled kids have gone through similar battles, shared the same feelings of failure, and in general, have all been a part of the same syndrome of experiences. Now, as I meet new parents who are hesitant, as I once was, to believe that the Orton approach used at Sandhills Academy to help the children reach their highest potential, really will 'turn tears into smiles.' I can even reassure them that the next year they'll be the ones wearing smiles and helping new parents to adjust.

"At the end of Patrick's first year in a special school, he wrote the following poem that he read aloud on Grandparent's Day."

WHAT SANDHILLS MEANS TO ME!!

Loving, affectionate, devoted, and kind,
Teaching, training, instructing for time
For the time when I must go out, bright and new
And show everyone just what I can do!

Slow and lazy is what they all called me,
And I to all their words pounding down upon me.
Downcast, blue, dejected, crestfallen,
I needed some help to keep me from fallin'.

Trust, confidence, faith, and reliance,
Helped to give me the strength and defiance,
I needed to make it in this dingy old world,
With knowledge and wisdom teachers helped me to see.
And that is the truth, of what Sandhills means to me.

"HE LOVES ME MORE THAN HE USED TO"

Douglas' mom sent him to preschool at the age of three because he was so precocious. There the teacher observed that he was "different." In October of first grade he was recommended for psychological testing by his teacher. His oral comprehension and verbal skills were top notch while attempts at reading and writing were "dismal." It was recommended that Douglas go to resource room for 50 minutes a day.

Douglas came to first grade a smart, confident, happy kid. Over and over my attempts to have his teachers understand him were only met with victim blaming. "Douglas isn't motivated. Douglas could do it if he tried. Douglas has low self-esteem. Douglas doesn't act LD." By the end of third grade his IQ had dropped, and all test scores were abysmal. He was so sad. Douglas cried most afternoons throughout third grade and on April 22nd said he was going to kill himself. Obviously we had a child in crisis. He began to see a psychiatrist and enrolled in a special school.

"Imagine my delight at having Douglas eager to get to school every day, happy when he returns home, testing from two to three grade levels higher than last year, reading with a vengeance, helping his twin sister with her homework, and his most recent success—being elected Student Council President at Sandhills Academy. Douglas is the happy, confident, creative kid I sent to school over four years ago."

At the end of his first year at Sandhills, Douglas wrote the following letter to the teachers:

I can't describe the profound sense of despair I felt as a mother, and now when his teachers describe him as willing and brilliant, I wonder if I'm dreaming

Dear Sandhills:
Teachers of Sandhills

You have given me hope for the future and you have given me love education and securutey. A teacher is love and security and love is with in and with out. In this case it is both in and out. You're kind, gentil and nice to me and my classmates. You are a haret warmer of the soul. You have made a difference in my life, my einter life!

Douglas' twin sister reflected on life with him. "He used to always be in a bad mood and nothing seemed to matter to him. He didn't care about school or homework. He always made up excuses and he lied. He thought everything was unfair. Now, he is not always in a bad mood. He has more confidence, and he cares about school. He handles being teased better. He handles everything better. I feel like he loves me more than he used to. Could it be because Douglas now loves himself more? I'm sure of it!"

"ANGELA WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING"

Failure was experienced in first grade. She overheard her teacher comment to a cohort, "Angela will never amount to anything because she has a learning disability." This made her feel that she was just a dumb person. She enrolled in a special school for grades four and five. A change occurred in her confidence level and in her school work within the first six weeks. She succeeded because "learning was easy." Angela also remarked that her teachers helped her to become organized. She expressed, "Attending Sandhills Academy gave me the strength to go back to public school."

Angela is a perfectionist and it has been difficult for her to accept her weaknesses, but she says that her strengths outweigh any weaknesses she has. She likes to write poetry but doesn't want anyone to read her work. Her mother said, "It's nice to know that her school experiences have not conquered her spirit."

Angela wants to go to college and would like a career working with children. Her father and mother feel that she can do what she sets her mind to do. Despite what one teacher said, Angela has amounted to something! She has a caring and generous spirit and has always made her parents proud. After all, she ranks 98th in a senior class of 350 and will graduate this year.

THEIR WORLD

What is their world? It is a world that most would rather not experience, but the truth is that each person with a learning disability, dyslexia or attention deficit disorder can evolve as strong, more creative and more persistent than most of their peers. It's really not such a bad way to go! ■

Editor's Note: Joan Hathaway is the founding Director of Sandhills Academy, a school for students with learning disabilities in South Carolina.

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LEARNING DISABILITIES: A 25-YEAR JOURNEY

A Story of Two Boys

BY DIANE PURCHASE

In a schoolroom in Massachusetts, 25 years in the past....sits a quite shy little boy who is asking himself, "Why me?" This boy is being called names by his mother, like "lazy" and "stupid." His teachers think he is not trying or perhaps he is slightly retarded. He himself doubts and feels, "maybe they are right. Maybe if I just tried harder, but how? Maybe if I could just read all those words on the pages, but how? I am trying, I am not lazy! I don't know what is wrong with me, but maybe I wouldn't feel so dumb, if they would just stop yelling at me. They make me feel so small."

Then a Teacher comes along and says she thinks maybe this boy has learning disabilities, or something called Dyslexia. The boy's soul leaps for joy, "I'm not dumb! I just can't learn the same way as everyone else, but that's okay, they will help me now." His Mom will never truly understand her son's disability and can never really give him the support he will need.

The School system decides this boy can remain in regular classes for the rest of his 4th grade year. Next year they will bus him miles across the city to a new school. The boy is apprehensive about going on a bus and to a new school, but he is happy that this, his 5th year in school, will make the difference. He will learn to read.

The School system fails to provide a Special Education Teacher at the boy's new school. He is told he must now leave the school for his reading class and walk many city streets to another school. He must do this on his own, without anyone walking him. He must do this in all forms of weather. He then is taught by the Reading Teacher at the new school for just one period a day and then he must return himself to his school. Eventually, for this boy, something finally clicks. He is helped by this "Special" Teacher, she shows him he is not dumb. He must just learn differently than the rest.

Those days for this child were, by design, stressful. He was always afraid of being late, for one school or another. He felt isolated and

A father tells his son that he is so good at being a son he is 'tall' enough to reach up and touch the sky. For a moment the weight this child bears is lifted and his eyes show a sparkle of joy.

alone. In his struggle to learn to read he found a sensitivity that he carries with him today.

During this time his peers were relentless in their teasing of this boy. They called him names. They were the worst, kids can be so cruel. They seemed to thrive on making this boy feel stupid and "small." They never let him truly belong to any group. They were afraid of him, their perception was that he was somehow retarded and if they got too close it might be catching. Again he was alone.

Twenty five years later, in a School room in the same Massachusetts city, sits a 4th grade boy in an Integrated Language Learning Disabled Classroom. They now have classes integrating kids with Learning Disabilities with their peers. They have yearly meetings to discuss the progress of the child. They involve the parent with the process. They have professionals who supply services to LD children, such as, Occupational Therapist, LD Consultants, Tutors, Counselors, Reading Specialists, etc. They have laws and mandates which require that the school systems provide every single child their "Free Appropriate Education." The system has grown....or has it?

Today, a man sits with his 9 year old son at their kitchen table. The boy is a shy sensitive boy, who has just asked his father, "Why me?" The man sits across from his child holding his hands and tells the story of another little boy, about the same age, who had asked himself that same question, so many years ago...the man remembers.

The man has just learned that his child, while at school, pretends to read. A skill the man had learned himself and could relate to. The child tells his father of an incident at school where he feels, in front of his peers, his teacher has made him to feel "small." He tells his father how sometimes his teachers will ask for everyone having difficulties reading something to come to the back of the class. She will read the problems out loud for them—the same group goes back, day after day. The boy tells over and over again of how he is made to feel "small." The boy doesn't even want his parents to say anything to his teacher about his feelings because he is afraid she will embarrass him. The boy is hurt, the father is angry.

The System says it cares. It does seem different. Yet this father knows that with all the changes in the system, it really hasn't taken its first step yet.

A father sits at the kitchen table with his son and tells him to feel "Tall" because he has been able to keep up despite his disability. That he is so good at being a son, he is "tall" enough to reach up and touch the sky. For a moment the weight this child bears is lifted, and his eyes show a sparkle of joy. This boy knows that his father understands.

A husband looks to his wife and says, "I thought that education had come further than this. I thought it would be better for my children. Will it ever really change?"

The wife sees a little boy in her husband's eyes, asking, "Why me?" ■

Editor's Note: Diane Purchase resides in Springfield, Massachusetts.

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BEST WISHES TO NCLD

Mary and Peter Kalikow

Learning Disabilities are nothing new... understanding them is.

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FIRST GRADE

It's Not What I Thought It Would Be!

BY INGE W. HOROWITZ

A recurring cycle begs examination...Why are there so many behaviorally and learning disordered individuals who have in their histories EAF—*early academic failure?*

Why do we continue to ignore the early warning signs of academic failure and let the problem of EAF fester in our classrooms?

Why do we not heed the studies which have demonstrated repeatedly that EAF can be catastrophic for the child, with negative consequences throughout life?

The situation presents a puzzling paradox... because EAF can be prevented! Furthermore, the cost of prevention is negligible when compared to the enormous economic and societal costs of dealing with the products of EAF. Questions concerning the on-going tolerance of EAF in our schools include: "Which children are at risk for EAF?" "Why not prevent EAF?" "Who should be doing something about this?" "What should be done?"

WHICH CHILDREN ARE AT RISK?

There are several subtle, easily overlooked characteristics which place certain children at risk for early academic failure (EAF). While they appear to achieve most early developmental milestones as expected, there may be some delay in the acquisition of language. Parents and preschool teachers typically characterize these children as being bright but possibly somewhat clumsy. They pass school readiness tests, and with few exceptions Kindergarten may still be a happy time.

It is in First Grade, when the formal learning process begins, that the first, subtle, at-risk-for-LD signs usually appear. Formal testing may not be necessary to detect the problem. The signs can be observed in the classroom setting...as the child is engaged in reading, writing, math, and activities requiring attention and organization. The two most common areas of EAF are reading and writing.

Reading: Trouble reading the printed symbols may initially surface in Kindergarten with difficulty learning the letter and number names. In First Grade it shows up in failure to recall the letter sounds, especially the sounds of vowels, and short vowels in particular. One can watch the child try and struggle as he or she searches an impoverished memory store for the needed sound or word. One sees the eyes travel around the page, down to the picture, up to the ceiling. The child guesses, loses place, skips lines, and the feeling of insecurity begins to overwhelm. He or she is aware that other children are catching on and moving ahead. What does this child know of individual differences? He only knows that reading has become a daily, painful struggle.

Writing: The first red flag may be a child's difficulty remembering how to form the letters or numbers, when everyone else is catching on. There are gaps between the parts, grossly uneven letter/number size and spacing, drifting above or beneath the writing line, reversals, or marks that don't resemble the written symbols at all. Often circles are formed incorrectly in clockwise direction, and vertical lines go from the bottom up. These children will likely need more time than anyone else to finish a writing assignment, and they have much difficulty copying from the blackboard. Pencil pressure is frequently too heavy, and multiple erasures may tear holes in the paper. Pencil grasp and writing posture are frequently atypical. Often these children lay their heads down to one side on their desks as they write. Writing is laborious, slow, and even painful. These children tire

easily, and their written work is often unfinished. As they copy from the blackboard, gaze shifts from paper to search the blackboard for nearly every letter. Their papers show crowding, or skipping of letters and lines. Stacks of papers go home with red corrections and comments by the teacher: "Incomplete," "Finish at home." Parents try to hide their disappointment. They may question the child or make no comment at all. And this is the reward for earnest effort! One highly regarded pediatrician/author refers to this syndrome as "developmental output failure."

Every year thousands of bright, hopeful children begin formal instruction. Eagerly, they look toward the teacher to open that magical door to reading. The majority, who would learn by any method, the "natural" readers, begin to take books home. They earn smile faces and praise and feel good about themselves as learners.

But what about these others—the late bloomers, the maturationally different, the learning disabled? They now fall victim to an educational system Catch-22. Membership in First Grade imposes expectations, conformity to a predetermined curricular sequence and pace, with little space for individual differences.

School systems generally adopt a single reading series. Teachers are required to teach the prescribed reading program; and children, placed in graduated reading groups, are expected to conform to the sequence and pace demanded in the teachers' manual. And when a child is unable to conform in some way, our system sends the message, "You have failed"...when in fact it is our system that has failed ...failed to respond immediately and appropriately to the child's learning differences.

In the name of LRE, the least restrictive environment, reluctance to single out the child, or incur additional expense, we often do a dangerous thing; we let the problem worsen. This is especially true in the early grades when self esteem is most vulnerable. Almost routinely we begin with prolonged band-aid services. Failure is serious, but we don't treat it that way! Given a serious medical problem, would we chose a physician who follows this band-aid practice?

WHY NOT PREVENT EARLY ACADEMIC FAILURE?

Three reasons are suggested. First, many teachers are disadvantaged. As children growing up with look-say reading, and later as education majors, they never learned the systematic, sequen-

When a child is unable to conform in some way, our system sends the message: You have failed, when in fact it is our system that has failed...failed to respond immediately and appropriately to the child's learning differences

tial phonetic code of the English language. That is, as part of their formal teacher preparation, many never received the training that would empower them to teach a child generically, how to break the reading code. As education majors, required to take a course equivalent to "The Teaching of Reading," they typically learned about the major publishers of reading series. The major publishers produce reading materials which are curiously similar, in step with the current trend. Those now in favor emphasize various versions of the Whole Language approach. The student teachers examine the costly and beautiful printed, audiovisual, and consumable materials, and review the Teacher's Manuals. They're told that school systems generally adopt one of these reading series and, as teachers, they need only follow the sequence of instruction outlined in the Teacher's Manual wherever they will teach. With little more to go on than this, the First Grade teacher may well be at a loss about what to do when a child cannot learn to read. And if she is the exception who has learned to teach reading generically, that is phonetically and systematically, she is usually not able to, due either to time constraints or to administrative prohibition.

The second reason EAF is not prevented, indeed at times it seems promoted, is economic. The multimillion dollar textbook publishing industry has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. Financial disaster could ensue if teachers somehow would magically begin, in Kindergarten and First Grade, to teach phonological analysis and systematic, sequential decoding. That would mean an end to formal instruction of the mechanics of reading—for most children before Fourth Grade! They would by that time have the tools needed to read most anything they want. Teachers could get on with teaching expanded content and nuances of comprehension. The publishing industry, which has conditioned us to use remedial reading materials through high school, and even at the college level, would obviously never want to see this happen!

A third reason for the perpetuation of EAF is administrative, and it occurs on several levels. On the federal level, we have laws that successfully protect children's confidentiality and parents' rights. But they set in motion such a lengthy administrative process that the child's needs for immediate relief and remediation are overlooked. And timing of the help is crucial!

On the state level, textbook adoption practices are part of the problem. Members of textbook adoption committees, in high rise offices, yield to the myths promulgated by the powerful publishers. One myth posits that children learn to read English text without first being taught the code—the code that puts them in control of decoding words. Another myth is the need to change to a different reading series every few years. Of course, that sells books!

At the school level, administrative causes of EAF are many. There is the lack of extra trained personnel who could step in immediately to take these children aside and teach them individually. Too many caring and well-intentioned administrators are, for a variety of reasons, forced to cite time consuming legal requirements. Often, the LD teacher already has a

full quota of students early in the school year...and less individualized, band-aid services usually just postpone the inevitable need. Yet everyone knows very well that waiting is not in the best interest of the child!

WHO SHOULD BE DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THIS?

The answer to this question is obvious. The problem is systemic, and it needs to be addressed at all levels. So the "who" is all of us. First, there are the big publishers and the I.R.A., the International Reading Association, the powerful organization that speaks for the big publishers and is largely funded by them. The I.R.A. is to the teaching of reading what Women's Wear Daily is to the fashion world, ie., I.R.A. dictates how we teach reading; WWD dictates what we wear.

Next in line are the universities. Most college departments of education still do not require a backbone course in the structure and sequence of intensive phonics for teachers of reading. There is a puzzling resistance to equipping our teachers with the ability to teach phonological awareness and the rules governing the phonetic code. Finally, the legislators and administrators must look at the cumbersome special education process. They must design and then insist on ways to respond more quickly to the failing child....the child who requires a different pace or a different approach to learning.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

High priority among the remedies must be given to the method of reading instruction. More of the same, only in smaller groups or even one-to-one is not a logical answer. Research has clearly shown what must be done. Before formal instruction begins, we must train the child's ears to become phonemically aware, sensitive to the rhyme and rhythm of language. Then we must empower the beginning reader to be in control—by giving him or her solid mastery of the code. While many children will learn to read no matter how we teach them, the child at risk for EAF needs a different pace and direct, systematic teaching of reading.

Such an approach to beginning reading instruction is one which is highly structured. It teaches, in clear, logical, almost mathematically predictable sequence,the basic one-syllable patterns of the English language...and all of the words related to each pattern. The vowels are the keys to reading. Knowing how to sound them opens the door. Contrary to prevailing opinion, [this author believes] it best to teach first the long vowel sounds and constructions in one-syllable words—before the short vowels are introduced. There are several good reasons for this. Each vowel has but one long sound, and that sound is its name; therefore, it can be more easily retrieved. On the other hand, there are several sounds for each of the short vowels. Furthermore, the long vowel sounds "stay in the air" or are audible much longer than any of the short vowel sounds. This is of particular significance in light of recent research linking processing delays and dyslexia.

Next in line is a logical phonics system. The child encounters one-syllable words only—until he has learned to decode independently all of the basic long and short vowel constructions. The introduction of two-syllable words begins with suffixes attached to the one-syllable words previously mastered. And so the reading and writing instruction must carefully and gradually build. At no time should a child be

By reducing early academic failure, we would soon begin to see a reduction in those staggering statistics of school dropout, functional illiteracy, lifetimes of underemployment, self-destructive, antisocial, and even criminal behavior

asked to read or spell a word that he or she is not equipped to decode.

Furthermore, print alone will not suffice. Teaching must rely heavily on multisensory techniques and manipulative materials. Special visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic strategies must be available in the learning-to-read program. For example, the visual materials should be large and clear, with ample spacing between lines of print. Carefully paced oral instruction may be needed by the child with auditory processing delay. Some children may need to arrange manipulative letters, to build and analyze words as part of the learning process. Some may even require the additional structure of grids on which to build words. Writing, using a variety of media, including paper and pencil, must always be an integral part of the instruction. Without doubt, such an individualized, orderly, phonetic, multimodality approach to beginning reading could largely prevent early academic failure. It is absolutely sound in terms of learning theory and child development.

A second priority for preventing EAF is a major increase of funding at the primary school level. These are critical years of great maturational differences in children. It is clearly absurd to expect all first graders to learn in the same way and at a similar pace. Increased funding is needed to employ more teachers in order to reduce class size and to offer developmentally based curriculum options. Skilled personnel, collaborative or consulting teachers, must be available to immediately assist the teacher and help the child—just as soon as he or she begins to fall behind.

CONCLUSION

By ensuring early academic success, just think how much we could reduce the number of referrals... for LD services...for counseling because of low motivation, school phobia, and damaged self-esteem...for medical care of aches and pains, disorders of attention, and other ailments. But that would be only the beginning. By reducing early academic failure, we would soon begin to see a reduction in those staggering statistics of school dropout, functional illiteracy, lifetimes of underemployment, self-destructive, antisocial, and even criminal behavior.

Inevitably, we will continue to have adults in our society who harbor feelings of worthlessness and helplessness. But our educational system should firmly resolve that those feelings will never again stem from the hurt experienced by children in the First Grade...a grade which these children recall having entered eagerly, anticipating to learn to read; a grade in which they can remember having tried and tried, and failed and failed; and oh, it was not what they thought it would be! ■

Editor's Note: Inge Horowitz is an Educational Consultant for the Division of Child Neurology at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. References for her article are available from NCLD.

INTIMACY WITH THINKING

BY CAROL CROWELL

Students have a natural affinity for intellectual exercises. They enjoy them and the application of logical thought. Young minds must be trained, especially so, since television has conditioned children to be passive observers. Students must be taught how to use their intellect and then not to squander mental energies on destructive or unworthy tasks. Understanding fully how to reason from cause and effect is necessary in order to reach proper and valid conclusions. Further, the ability to think rationally is inextricably tied to the development of the total child. Once students acquire a given "repertoire" of typically illogical arguments they are dumfounded by the abundance of illogical thought passing daily for fact and thus history.

JAY LENO LAMPOONS

Jay Leno, the Late Night talk show host, collects illustrative headlines from America's newspapers demonstrating unclear thinking. The following are examples of what he uses as lampoons:

"Man, shot twice in head, gets mad!"
"Dead man told: Get back to work."
"Cockroach slain, husband badly hurt."
"Tribal council to hold June meeting in June."
"Boys cause as many pregnancies as girls."
"Liquor sales dip blamed on less drinking."
"First annual going out of business sale!"
"Slow driver arrested after four county chase."

The imprecise use of language has eroded our critical sensibilities and intolerance of blatant error.

BRIGHT STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES MUST BE STIMULATED

Teaching critical thinking, deductive reasoning and argumentation through humor captivates the students. It makes written assignments a challenge and fun. Students enjoy making a scrapbook of similar quotations from articles and headlines. They are then asked to critique and correct the examples of illogic or "mis-speak." The exercise is helpful in teaching students to write clearly. This kind of work can incorporate any lessons on mechanics of the language, so that learning to write can be individualized. Thinking clearly and well is implicit in all the other more specific skills of learning so appropriate exercises can be incorporated in this curriculum too.

Though educators often think teaching the child with learning disabilities should be done at basic levels, bright children with learning disabilities become easily bored if not engaged in stimulating learning. Historically, knowledge was conveyed through an "oral tradition" long before men took up the stylus and pen. Teaching literature and reasoning skills without tapping into deficit areas gives the LD child needed affirmation and successful academic experiences. One effective technique is painting "thought pictures" which create indelible mental images. These can be conjured up when a parallel association is made. Through similar associations, we create our own memory files much like the computer does. The "filing system," as it were, must be created in a systematic and orderly way, so the child can use the wealth of material stored there.

Early reading and the in-putting of countless experiences and stories provide not only heroes and models which can later be emulated or used for comparison, but unseen, comforting companions.

Parents remain the greatest influence on the child and have power to shape and sculpt the child through their use of language and example

Perhaps the only things that a parent can truly give to a child are good health and physical constitution as well as a comprehensive education to arm the child for life. Most parents seem eager to do the best job they can. Even with so many impinging outside pressures, the parents remain the greatest influence on the child and have power to shape and sculpt the child through their use of language and example.

When children are treated as though their thoughts are important and relevant, they inform significant adults. From the most elemental level, children can be introduced to different concepts concerning logical thinking. Drawing reasonable inferences, reasoning by analogy, distinguishing cause and effect from events which occur simultaneously or which occur proximate in time, spatial perception, recognizing relations, discovery, creativity, and asking and answering such questions as, "What would happen if...?" and "What might be done about...?" and "What might have been the matter?" All of these kinds of reasoning can be explored in a total school curriculum which recognizes the importance of ongoing development of thinking skills.

DEVELOPING CLEAR AND CORRECT THINKING

Children who learn about congruence, deductive and inductive reasoning, reasoning from cause and effect, and calculating approximations of truth, appreciate the process of developing clear and correct thinking. Particular fallacies like the fallacy of false cause might be the focus of work for a semester. Common errors include mistaking the cause for the effect or the effect for the cause. Other errors involve: (1) mistaking coincidence for cause and effect; (2) mistaking sequential events for cause and effect; or (3) mistaking related events for cause and effect.

■ Deriving False Conclusions

Class exercises might include reading stories with derived conclusions which are blatantly false, but which appear to follow from the story. For instance:

Mrs. Stanlick has observed that industrious, hard-working people live in well-kept, clean houses. Lazy people seem to live in dirty houses. Mrs. Stanlick claims that if the government would provide everyone with a clean house, then no one would be lazy.

Several teaching objectives can be extracted from this piece. The students investigate the cause and effect relationship to see if clean houses resulted from the original condition of the house. Are dirty and clean houses, as a matter of fact, the result of a process or an original condition? What are the implications of accepting the original thinking? Discussions can arise questioning the cause of blight, unhealthful living conditions, poverty, renovation of slums, etc. Junior high students can understand basic syllogisms which illustrate deductive reasoning based on this argument.

■ Incorrect Conclusions from Congruence

The following story illustrates congruence, simultaneous events which mistakenly lead one to incorrect conclusions. At another level, it is an example of

superstition, i.e., drawing assumptions from a kind of magical thinking:

Susan and Randy were riding their bikes to school together. Randy said, "We'd better step on it. A storm is threatening rain any second!" Susan said, "Ah! Don't say that, or for sure it will rain!" Immediately, a torrential outburst soaked the bikers. "See?" Susan lamented. "If you hadn't said anything, the storm would have blown over at least until school finished."

Ask students to identify what cause-and-effect relationship Susan and Randy believed to exist. Do you agree with this thinking? Examples like the above and other foolish, superstitious thought can be collected from family experiences, critiqued and entered into a class scrapbook for discussion and recognition.

■ **Idioms**

Idioms, another rich resource, represent sage advice from our ancestors and predecessors. These can be scrutinized. For instance: "Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones." At one level the students can analyze for meaning and application in their own lives.

Older children might be asked to analyze the idiom as to whether or not it established or supports a myth, i.e., a truism which is not substantiated.

Only in the last few decades have educators recognized that a preponderance of educational goals involve primarily the left hemisphere of the brain. These include typically, the three r's: reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as pure deductive reasoning. But the ability to recognize patterns, the ability to generalize and to integrate past learning by application, as well as some kinds of inductive reasoning, are identified as right brain activities. More importantly learning activities are now calculated as employing the interplay of all parts of the brain.

However, the integrated activity of both hemispheres of the brain with the frontal lobe is not fully understood and there are individual adaptations which make this understanding more complex. Even so, teaching a program of critical thinking throughout the grades leads to developing the kind of students who look critically at language and their own purposive writing. Moreover, it develops the kind of human being who is vibrant, responsive and an enthusiastic learner and doer. The practical

The only way to stop 'the thinking process' is with distracting, consuming activity. But this is precisely what is happening: we are producing generations of children who 'do not and cannot think.'

side-effect is that the child is helped to make reasonable decisions in his own life.

Some philosophers have said that the mind is impelled to thought which leads to understanding, that grasping self-evident knowledge is automatic and that the mind cannot abide contradiction. The only way to stop the mind from "the thinking process" is to remain occupied with others or with distracting, consuming activity. However, this is precisely what is happening in society, so that we are producing generations of children who "do not and cannot think."

TAUGHT TO LOOK

For the child with learning disabilities, however, learning often requires a more arduous, methodical approach. Newell Kephart and other pioneers in the field of learning disabilities explained that the child must be "taught to look." What they meant by this was that the child might "see" and have something within vision without being able to interpret what it was he was seeing and its implications.

Isolated from the child's body of experiences the student learns to respond in prescribed patterns to satisfy the demands of a specific task. This patterned response, however, is without a comprehensive or integrated understanding of how the child's action fits into a larger scheme. This activity, so characteristic of the individual with learning disabilities, has been termed "splinter skills." Often the child who has been adept at compensating for his deficits is but a "bundle of splinter skills." At whatever age the remedial specialist encounters the individual, training chaining, integrating, and conditioning until automaticity is attained is the desired goal. Differentiation needs to be achieved not only in gross and perceptual-motor areas, but it must be taught in the cognitive areas as well.

ESTEEM BUILDING

But maintaining a continuing dialogue with youngsters during the pre-school years builds the affective domain. The parents and extended family who speak to the growing child as a seeing, experiencing individual, while commenting on what precisely is going on, assist the child in translating what he sees. In today's busy world, all too often the baby "is entertained" but without being engaged in conversation.

The child with a learning disability is often a literal thinker. Therefore, things must be stated clearly for the child and without subtlety. A good axiom for teachers, parents and significant adults at any level is "assume nothing and check understanding frequently!" One can check the child's understanding by asking "telling questions" which do not threaten or belittle the child. Since children are our replacements, it makes good sense to take them seriously as potential adults, who will one day be leaders and significant citizens in society. But parents and teachers need to be honest and forthright with the child, sharing thoughts and feelings earnestly and candidly.

Coincidence, simultaneously occurring events, can be difficult to discern in the area of emotions and relationships, where much is felt at a given moment. Unless we see clearly, and are able to investigate, we cannot adjust our own behaviors accordingly. Students who do not see the cause and effect

in relationships are at risk for not only developing fuzzy thinking which is manifest in oral discourse, written language, and difficulty with reading comprehension, but affective problems as well.

The "affective domain" refers to the individual's emotional development, his/her ability to respond to and give appropriate feelings in a dynamic, self-adjusting manner. This area builds personality. And personality, as opposed to character, inter-relates with the world.

Through the development of the "affective domain" the child learns to make friends, feel secure, seek satisfying experiences, entertain himself, and be solitary yet not lonely. Growth and development through well defined stages, as described by Piaget, Gesell and Erik Erikson, are necessary if healthy identity is to take place. The child must be conscious of his limitations and boundaries, where he ends and another begins. These are often "deep waters" for the dyslexic or LD individual, for what seems self-evident to most others can be for him/her an imponderable puzzle.

PARALLEL THINKING

"Parallel thinking" can assist understanding. By "parallel thinking" I mean teaching through the use of analogy, metaphor, and other illustrative figurative language. The currently popular whole language approach may offer additional benefits for the learning disabled child if the approach effects a curriculum rich in helpful literary devices and colorful language.

The typical individual can develop mental or emotional problems if s/he does not develop an appreciation for the sequence involved in cause and effect relationships. As an example:

Susan's parents argue after Father comes home from work as they sit down to dinner. Susan silently thinks she is the cause of their arguing. Later when her parents get a divorce Susan feels if only she had been a nicer girl, the divorce would not have happened.

The point is that the development of thinking skills is necessarily bound up with the development of the total child, particularly the child's emotional and affective areas. Ignorance, in this case, is not bliss but a perversion which will wreck havoc on the child's psyche!

It is a general phenomenon that children blame themselves for the marital misfortunes of their parents. Children taught early to think logically could be spared all manner of torments if they could articulate their own feelings and identify the cause of the feelings and the cause of the behaviors or situations giving rise to these feelings.

Further, it is commonplace that LD students are not aware of the "self-talk" or "inner dialogue" that is carried on within each of us. It is enlightening to students as a parent or teacher to "walk them through" a taxing perplexing experience. Yet when you ask youngsters what they "say inside their head", their response indicates they are mute and passive as though they are waiting for a script.

Coupled with their academic problems, children with learning disabilities are often perceived as socially awkward. It is this aspect that causes them to be disliked by their peers and teachers, causing them to feel alienated. Effective social skills are built on the foundation of a wholesome "affective domain." Without this, the child cannot read people and social situations.

Graduates of special schools explain they use the

remedial strategies they have learned in order to insure career and personal success. Of those who have problems on the job, the blocks to success amount to poor social skills and difficulty in the "affective domain." Being chronically late, not acquiescing to the boss's directives, taking personal offense to a reasonable request or criticism, or lacking seriousness inappropriately are examples. If uncorrected, these failures persist through the years, becoming obstacles to success in the workplace and in inter-personal relationships.

But education is a lifelong avocation. For the students fortunate enough to have received appropriate learning techniques, their "special" education cannot stop upon graduation or when they are mainstreamed. With the means and incentives to continue learning, expanding one's horizons, skills, and competence becomes the adventure of life. If we are to see these unique individuals as happy, contented, productive citizens, then they need facilitating through each of life's challenges, not the least of which is early, progressive, and comprehensive training in logical thought. ■

Editor's Note: Carol Crowell is a doctoral candidate at the University of South Florida. The author's references and footnotes for this article are available from NCLD.

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HANDWRITING

The Perspective of a Survivor

BY KATE GLADSTONE

Whether you have a learning disability or not, handwriting can be a problem. Dictation is great—but we can't all have private secretaries or tape recorders all the time. (Imagine 500 business travelers on an airplane dictating to tape recorders—sooner or later, someone would ask for silence!)

Typewriters (and later, computers) were supposed to avoid handwriting problems...they do help a lot. But a keyboard's no cure-all—not until someone invents a pencil sized keyboard that writes any language, needs no power, is easily replaced if lost or damaged, and survives being man-handled, dropped, or flushed down the toilet.

CHANGING TIMES

Many businesses and private people are relying more and more on "pen computers"—where data entry relies on pen-strokes, not key-strokes. Off to a slow start, these may soon command the workplace: what happens then for illegible writers?

(Look at the UPS delivery clipboard when you get a package. No more clipboard—it's a sophisticated handwriting computer storing signatures and other vital information. Or look at the Department of Defense: since 1994, Armed Service medics have been using a system called "Hippocrates"—small, hand-size computers into which doctors enter handwritten information.)

By the time today's children (learning disabled or not) look for work, good handwriting will be as vital to employers as good typing ever was. Want ads in the year 2025 may read like want ads from 1825: "Legible rapid handwriting is essential"...because how else will employees be able to use the office equipment?

Are we preparing today's children for tomorrow's handwriting demands? Probably not: most handwriting today is, frankly, dysfunctional (even if the writer is "normal"). Even if you're "normal", writing readably, at length, at a practical speed is often quite a chore...and it is ever more of a job to read other people's writing! (If we talked the way we handwrite, speech therapists would become very, very rich.)

DIFFICULTY WITH THE SYSTEM

This may be, in part, because of the way our educational system teaches writing. Let's look at the standard teaching of writing in this culture, and see how it creates needless difficulty for everyone...and especially for the learning disabled person.

Typically, students start with a supposedly simple style, "printing": letters pieced together mostly out of perfect circles, perfect verticals, and perfect arcs: the very shapes which are least easily formed by the human hand. For the first year or two of literacy, small children are expected to express themselves by drawing sequences of these symbols—a difficult coordination task for anyone—especially the learning disabled person. (Even adults and older children or teens who "print" generally "cheat"— they unconsciously make the "printing" easier than the school model by making the circles and verticals less perfectly upright.) Then—sometimes overnight—teacher changes the rules; now that you are a little older, everything has to be written differently, *in a brand new ABC called "script."*

"Script" writing is far less readable, even at its best (after all, would YOU want to read a whole book written in "script" type?)...

and in any case one is never taught how to read it—just told to write it. Many schoolchildren—espe-

cially LD children—go for months, even years, before they fully "crack the code" of the new [script] alphabet. They may painfully copy the letters that teachers or parents write for them, but they cannot read them—cannot read important information like class assignments or notes from Mom.

Script letter-forms (especially the letters b,f,r,s,z, *b f r s z* and almost all of the *G, Q, P, J, T, Q, E, F, T, C, P, V* are not just extremely complex in terms of needless frilly loop-the-loops, but also very difficult to relate to anything else. Not only are they different from the "print" alphabet the child has just worked so hard to master, they are just different from the type of ordinary books, newspapers, etc. that we read every day: *f* ≠ F ≠ *F*

And, beyond the illogical insistence on letter-disguising "frills", those repeated loops and twiddles tend to make almost all script letters look more like each other than like the letter they are meant to be.

(For instance, script *G* and *S* look much more like each other than the *G* looks like "G" or the *S* looks like "S".)

Just as bad is the insistence on the ceaseless joining of letters, end to end, within all words—even extremely long ones like *multiculturalism, nationality,* or *handwriting,* and even letter-combinations where joins involve difficult sequences of curves (*ghost* and *quick* are examples).

All this joining is allegedly for speed—but (as in the above examples) it is

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Many schoolchildren—especially LD children—go for months, even years, before they fully 'crack the code' of the new (script) alphabet

imposed even where not joining (that is, lifting the pen), would be clearer, simpler, and less awkward. (In fact, we can see that most successful (fast and legible) adult writers of "script" writing "cheat": they make letters less frilly, less looped, and less joined up than their schoolteachers would have allowed. ("Like This" instead of *Like . This*).

What does this mean for LD kids learning how to write? LD kids need consistent instruction where earlier skills lead into later ones—we teach inconsistently, so that earlier skills are opposed to later ones. LD kids need to have their success recognized—as soon as success occurs in one style, we push it aside ("print" is for *little kids*) and impose something new. LD kids need "real world" skills—we impose handwriting styles that we, adults in the "real world," cannot handle well ourselves: we "cheat!"

Schoolteachers defend these practices by repeating, "Well, the average child can handle this"—if so, why is the "average" handwriting so bad? In any case, half of any group, by definition, is "below the average" for that group.

ONE WOMAN'S SOLUTION

How did I solve the handwriting problem for myself? At 24, I picked up a book on handwriting and calligraphy which taught Italic Handwriting. This is a simplified system, highly structured, and based on calligraphy. Separate flowing letters (which look something like an oval, slanted version of print) are allowed—not forced—to join up where the individual can make joins easily and legibly.

Unjoined, it works as print handwriting; *with joins, it's adult handwriting;* and with a calligraphy pen, it's an art—calligraphy.

Books are available on the subject (I'm working on a couple), courses are offered, workshops are held nationwide, and a growing number of schools are teaching italic writing to non-disabled, as well as disabled, students. It's never too late to learn: many adults have learned Italic and proudly turned in a new signature card at their bank! ■

Editor's Note: Kate Gladstone is an adult with ADD and dysgraphia, who found her own unique way to overcome her handwriting problems after years of experimentation and self-study. This approach is one approach of many to assist with handwriting problems.

ADDRESSING LANGUAGE DEFICITS

in the Language Based Curriculum at Windward School

BY CECILE L. STEIN, Ph.D.

How fortunate is the language-learning disabled youngster who was born after 1980! This is so because of our increased awareness of the central role which language plays in the development of learning disabilities.

This article addresses the following questions: (1) What is the language system? (2) Where is the language deficit to be found in the youngster with a learning disability? (3) How does one provide treatment for the disabled language system? The last question will be addressed based on the principles of the Language-Based Curriculum as used at the Windward School for learning disabled children.

THE LANGUAGE SYSTEM

To understand language and the language system, try to picture a ladder. Imagine that you are climbing this ladder until you reach the top where you enter a large place filled with every bit of knowledge you've acquired throughout your life. This repository contains facts about people, events and places, and their inter-relationships. We understand the meaning of language through the filter of our experiences.

Let the rungs on the ladder represent the different components of the language system. The first rung on which you step represents the sounds of the language you speak (called phonology). In order to understand and speak your language, you must be able to arrange these sounds into meaningful units, so at the second rung, you recognize that these sounds have formed words.

You've collected many words now, but the message isn't meaningful enough until you've climbed to the third rung where the syntactic system organizes the words into sentences. At the fourth rung, you've put the message together, and you can now enter this place which contains your world knowledge. It is here that you truly understand what the message means to you. Here, your accumulation of world knowledge gives the message its true meaning with all the color, shading and subtleties you interpret the message to mean. For example, having heard the sentence: "It's cold in this room", you may understand the message to mean a statement of fact or an indirect request from the speaker to close the window.

IDENTIFYING THE DEFICIT

Where is the language problem for the learning disabled individual? That depends. The problem could be in one, two or all of the areas in the language system. Some youngsters may have a weakness only in the area which affects sound analysis, the first rung of the language system. This child may, therefore, have difficulty primarily in discriminating between sounds when listening or in linking sounds to letters. The resulting problem may be a decoding deficit.

Other youngsters may have difficulty at vocabulary level, the second rung on the ladder. They have difficulty acquiring new words. Their vocabulary is limited which makes reading comprehension a struggle when text has many unknown words. In addition, expressing ideas may be laborious because of the lack of an available store of words.

Closely related to this vocabulary weakness are word finding problems, which occur frequently in the language-learning disabled population. Similar to the youngster with an insufficient expressive vocabulary, the child with word finding problems (also called word retrieval problems or anomia) has difficulty rapidly searching for the right words to express thoughts. The results of this problem vary. Some lan-

The purpose of the Language-Based Curriculum is to bring the principles of communication and language knowledge into the classroom

guage disabled youngsters may circumlocute or beat around the bush to explain ideas. This strategy often creates such vague and loose discourse that the listener is often unsure of the child's message. Another problem here is that the speaker may even lose his focus as he mentally wanders, trying to find the right words.

Some youngsters with word finding problems don't circumlocute, but give up the search for words. They are often the ones who say "I don't know" or "Forget it." They may speak less and are, consequently, uninformative.

The bilingual child with learning disabilities has a slight variation of this vocabulary/word finding theme. Being bilingual has its advantages when the underlying language system is strong. However, bilingual children with language-learning disabilities have problems acquiring true facility in both languages. Vocabulary acquisition and word finding problems affect both languages.

Imagine learning disabled children in a social studies class where recalling names, places and key ideas are required. These children may have difficulty retrieving the information fully on a test, or when responding to the teacher's questions in class. The answers they give may be tangential because they have problems stating the main point.

Children with difficulty at the syntactic level (rung three) have problems understanding the precise meaning of a sentence or paragraph (whether spoken or written). Without the syntactic system in place, that is understanding who did what to whom, the listener makes guesses about the message. Sometimes the guesses are good ones because the child has gone straight to his knowledge of the world to make the interpretation. For example, you need syntactic knowledge to understand a sentence such as: "The truck was hit by the car." since the subject is at the end of the sentence. In English, the subject is usually at the beginning.

You can use your world knowledge instead of syntax to understand: "The baby was fed by the mommy" because you know that mommies usually feed babies, not the other way around. Children with syntactic deficits try to use their world knowledge to understand language which is syntactically complex: but that's guessing at meaning. Their wrong guesses are highly noticeable. For example, some children might be confused as to who was hurrying home in the sentence: "Hurrying home from the movies, we found Roberta had left a note on the table."

Imagine the problems youngsters with syntactic deficits face when reading literature and social studies texts. How does this youngster get at the information as the text becomes more syntactically complex and the amount of information to wade through increases?

Some language-learning disabled youngsters may actually do fairly well understanding syntactic complexity, but have more trouble getting the point of the message. Making inferences and understanding the main idea involves using world knowledge, and some people are better at literal comprehension than making inferences and understanding figurative language. These youngsters may be the ones who don't understand jokes, sarcasm, slang, puns and idioms

such as "I couldn't return your call because I was all tied up at work today."

Many language-learning disabled youngsters have processing problems. They have difficulty remembering long sentences or sentences containing too much information. Following directions and retaining the details or facts in a story are affected. Some children have difficulty enjoying stories read to them because they haven't retained enough information or have become confused by too many characters and event changes.

In spite of these language problems, some children manage to have wonderful social lives. They enjoy people and people seek them out. Others, however, begin to have social problems because they have trouble keeping up with the rapid flow of conversation, introducing and maintaining topics in a conversation. Feeling unable to keep up, these youngsters exclude themselves from groups or become excluded.

REMEDIATION

How do we address these problems at Windward, particularly when in any given class, these different language problems coexist? Many youngsters receive language therapy from professionals certified by the American-Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA). However, there are principles which can be applied to all youngsters whether or not they receive individual language therapy. These principles relate to the school's curriculum, and parent-child language interactions.

LANGUAGE-BASED SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The purpose of the Language-Based Curriculum is to bring the principles of communication and language knowledge into the classroom. Here, both teacher and student are made aware of their responsibilities as communicators in the transmission and learning of the academic curriculum. The Windward School curriculum is an example of a total program where language skills are taught and reinforced throughout the curriculum. Teachers and language specialists work together to bring about this goal.

First, the learning disabled child needs to understand what he hears and reads. To reach that goal, the school transmits and teaches explicitly the rules of the language which the non-disabled child automatically acquires. For example, they are taught to distinguish a grammatical from an ungrammatical sentence, and correct the ungrammatical one. They must learn whether what they say, write or read makes semantic sense. Children without language impairments develop this knowledge with greater ease. They understand what they hear and read more efficiently.

Teaching the rules of the language improves the student's reading comprehension because it provides the foundation for precise sentence understanding. However, to achieve true reading comprehension, the learning disabled youngster must also be taught to use his world knowledge, develop inferential skills and learn the elements of what is called "story grammar."

The elements of story grammar, which include the main idea, characters, events and time, challenge the learning disabled reader as the story progresses from paragraph to paragraph. When a learning disabled child says that he doesn't understand what he is reading, the teacher must determine where within the language system he got lost, and find him strategies to get back on track.

Here, both teacher and student are made aware of their responsibilities as communicators in the transmission and learning of the academic curriculum

Second, the Language-Learning Disabled (LLD) child needs to develop communication skills. He is taught to recognize effective from non-effective communication, whether the listener understands his message and how to paraphrase when the first attempt fails to communicate.

Third, the LLD child needs to learn the language skills and strategies necessary for classroom success. For example, in a classroom, the LLD child needs to learn to ask questions about concepts being taught. He needs to recognize and respond when the language has confused him and ask for clarification. In a classroom conversation, the LLD child needs to be able to follow the focus of the teacher's lesson in order to make his personal contribution. All of these skills are important for social communication as well.

Teachers utilize specific questioning and responding procedures to maximize the comprehension and retention of the material taught. They speak at a slower rate to permit processing of information. They recognize when students are having communications breakdowns and utilize procedures to help the student shape and state his utterances. Teachers provide language organizing strategies for written expression.

PARENT-CHILD RESPONSIBILITIES

The language interaction between parent and child is critical to the early development of communication skills. The LLD child benefits, however, from special parental speaking strategies. To that end, it is important for parents to be able to size up the home communication environment. For example, do family members speak to the LLD child "on the run"? Is the speech rate too rapid for the child to be able to process information? Are there opportunities to make inferences and to hear inferences from others?

Face-to-face speaking is important for the child with attention and/or auditory processing problems. Pacing the flow of conversation so that the LLD youngster has an opportunity to organize thoughts and find the appropriate words to express ideas, revise and repair utterances is important as well. Asking the youngster for his opinions gives him a chance to take on new speaker responsibilities.

Parents can encourage appropriate social language skills which will benefit the child outside the home. Encouraging turn-taking behavior and correctly reading and responding to body language is part of social language skill development.

In conclusion, the development and learning of language skills are exciting processes to observe as they emerge in our children. The LLD child painstakingly learns these skills which are so naturally acquired by the non LD child. Their mastery breeds success. Once the process of language awareness has begun, learning has begun. ■

Editor's Note: Cecile L. Stein, Ph.D. is a consulting speech-language pathologist at Windward School in White Plains, New York. She has a private practice in Westchester County, New York, and conducts research on language disorders.

TEACHERS HAVE INFORMATION THAT NEEDS TO BE SHARED

BY JO FROHBIETER-MUELLER

If you teach and have the ability to write, you can help other teachers by writing about issues confronting them. Your experience will give credence to your compositions as you offer advice on ways to handle classroom situations or present activities that have been instructive and well received. Or, by the end of the day you may prefer to leave kids, school and reality behind and spin tales of fiction or write glorious poetry, but your writing will reflect an insight gained through the time you spend in the classroom.

I recently had lunch with a retired elementary teacher and was spellbound by the stories she told me about her years of teaching, children who linger in her memory, teaching techniques she developed through the years, and the ways she handled difficult situations in the classroom. This woman has wonderful stories to tell, valuable information to pass on, and I can't help but wonder if this is true of many other teachers.

I suggested to my luncheon companion that she share some of her stories and teaching techniques by writing either a few articles or a book, but she shrugged off my suggestion, saying she could write the manuscripts but didn't know how to go about getting them published.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

It's true that writing manuscripts requires one type of skill but getting them published requires a totally different skill. Not knowing how to get manuscripts into print is the bane of many writers, but as you will learn, selling manuscripts and getting them published is a matter of following a straight forward marketing plan.

Writers whose works are frequently published have learned what it takes to make a sale. They approach the writing and selling of their work as a business venture. They know how to target a market, strive to fulfill the needs of editors, and aggressively solicit publishers. On the other hand, many writers remain unpublished and unread because they keep writing only what they want, whether or not a market exists for their work, and because they are baffled by the marketing process.

BEATING THE ODDS

There are some tricks to beating the odds and getting into print. If you are trying to attract a publisher, write for a defined market, and be aware that some topics are easier to sell than others. Be sensitive to the types of manuscripts that are in demand. Did you know that nine times more non-fiction is printed than fiction? And, often non-fiction, "how-to" articles and books are the easiest to get published. Enticing titles and good hook sentences that lead readers into the body of the work make manuscripts attractive to editors. Also, providing photographs with a manuscript can make the difference between making a sale or receiving a rejection.

When trying to sell articles, short stories, and poetry to magazine publishers, learn to use writer's directories. The most widely used directory is Writer's Market, which contains information about thousands of publishers looking for material to print. Make a list of possible outlets, and to the editor of each of your targeted publications either send a one-page query letter stating your qualifications and a synopsis of the proposed article or send the completed manuscript. Make the query letter your best effort because it will determine whether or not your work will be considered for publication. While

If you teach and have the ability to write, you can help other teachers by writing about issues confronting them

it's nice to get published in large magazines with large circulations, it's wise to send queries to magazines with small circulations as well. It is usually easier to get published in the latter group. Send out at least six query letters simultaneously, mention in the letter that it is a simultaneous submission, and include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) with each mailing.

FICTION VS. NON-FICTION

Book manuscripts require a different approach. Authors of non-fiction can send their manuscripts directly to publishers, but most of the larger publishers refuse to look at fiction unless it is submitted by a literary agent. The problem is, literary agents usually aren't interested in representing beginning writers. Fortunately, editors at mid-size and smaller publishing houses willingly look at fiction manuscripts. This is the market you should approach if you are just starting your writing career. The best directory to use when researching possible publishers is Literary Market Place (R.R. Bowker), which lists thousands of publishers looking for both nonfiction and fiction. Writers of fiction should also refer to The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses published by Dustbooks.

When seeking a book publisher for nonfiction, send a proposal consisting of a one-page query letter, an outline, and an SASE to each potential publisher, but you must send at least three chapters when seeking a publisher for fiction. Again, send out at least six proposals simultaneously. Don't become unglued each time you get a rejection, but keep sending out proposals until you spark some interest. Eventually you will find the match between your work and the right publisher.

Even if you sell only a few manuscripts, it's wise to organize your writing activity as a business rather than operating it as a hobby so you can take advantage of tax breaks. You can't claim office space for work you do at home for your teaching occupation, but you CAN claim home office space used for a writing business. Set aside a part of your home to be used exclusively for writing so you can take the tax deductions available to workers with home offices. Also, when operating as a business, the IRS will allow you to deduct writing expenses (all of those postage stamps!) from your teaching income until your writing business becomes profitable. This, alone, can make your writing a money-making venture. ■

Editor's Note: Jo Frohbieter-Mueller is an author and columnist. Her most recent book, titled Getting Into Print, *has been selected for the Writer's Digest Book Club. THEIR WORLD is also an excellent starting point for authors who wish to share good ideas. Please call us for submission parameters.*

POST-COLLEGE EMPLOYMENT

One Look at How We Are Doing

BY JANET M. JENKINS

COLLEGE EXPERIENCE 8

Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from the full report on a Post Graduate Survey of Students with Learning Disabilities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, written by Janet Jenkins and edited by Kathleen Strosser.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has heightened the awareness that college is an option for students with learning disabilities. The purpose of the ADA is to grant individuals with disabilities the same civil rights protection that is provided to individuals on the basis of race, sex, national origin, or religion. ADA is based on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which guarantees equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. It is illegal for institutions receiving federal funds to discriminate against a person with a disability if that person is otherwise qualified to participate. Thus more students with learning disabilities are continuing with post secondary education and more accommodating programs are emerging.

After graduation from a post secondary institution, the next logical step is to seek employment in his or her field of study. There are several problems that arise in the transition from college to employment. These problems are due to stress, role changes, self advocacy, meeting employer demands, obtaining employment, economic dilemmas, and disclosure of disability.

Everyone has a certain amount of stress that they face when going through various changes, but change is very stressful for a person with a learning disability. Preparing a resume and interviewing for a competitive position can be very stressful, especially if one has a low self esteem and is unsure of his/her qualifications. There are also several role changes after graduation. Although self advocacy is stressed, the parents usually continue to be the major support system for the students while they attend college. Staff members in offices for students with disabilities are often unintentionally too supportive. How will the graduate with a learning disability request accommodations while employed if he or she has never negotiated accommodations independently? Employment is very competitive today and people need to know how to sell themselves to potential employers. Graduates with learning disabilities have been taught how to produce good resumes, but they often lack good interviewing skills. They will have problems understanding the interview questions or reading the body language of the interviewer. These problems can be addressed with video taped mock interviews which are often offered on most campuses, but are not always used by the students.

Another obvious transition problem is economic; students with learning disabilities may not know how to manage personal finances. Many who are obtaining their first full time employment positions are also purchasing or renting housing for the first time. Many young people have problems learning to budget their money, but for those with a learning disability, (especially in the math area), managing personal finances can prove to be very burdensome.

Disclosure can also be problematic when obtaining employment. How and when people with learning disabilities disclose their disability can not only determine obtaining a position, but also job retention. If a person discloses the disability prior to or during the interview, he runs the risk of not being considered for that position due to an employer's ignorance. Obviously, this is illegal, but

There is no 'best time' to disclose a disability, but after the offer has been made or within the first few weeks of employment, disclosure is warranted

difficult to prove. There is no "best time" to disclose the disability since every disability and circumstance is different, but it appears that after the offer has been made or within the first few weeks of employment, disclosure of a learning disability is warranted. The worst time to disclose a disability is when a person has erred and uses the disability to cover up the mistake. Obviously, all people make mistakes, but mistakes should not be blamed on the disability. The bottom line is that the employer will almost always find out about a disability and it is better if the employer finds out in a positive way from the person with the disability.

People with learning disabilities are very creative, talented and sometimes gifted individuals. The statements made here concerning the transition from college to employment are general statements and do not imply that all people with learning disabilities will encounter these problems. In observing the data collected through the graduate survey, it is clear that not all people with learning disabilities are having problems obtaining employment.

A SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED

A survey was conducted to find out if students with learning disabilities who graduated from institutions of higher education in the state of Pennsylvania found employment within their field of study.

A total of 140 surveys were sent out (10 surveys to each institution) and 34 surveys were returned. The students' graduation dates ranged from May 1987 to December 1993, a six year span.

The following 14 Pennsylvania Universities were invited to participate: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock and West Chester. Surveys were returned from seven of these Universities: California (2), Clarion (3), East Stroudsburg (5), Edinboro (7), Kutztown (4), Lock Haven (7), and Slippery Rock (6) which totaled 34 responses. Some difficulties [in obtaining responses] occurred because participating institutions lacked a consistent tracking system for graduates.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

In summary, the results from the Post Graduate Survey look positive. Within the Pennsylvania State Systems of Higher Education, sixty-one percent found full time employment related to their field of study. Fifty-eight percent of the students with learning disabilities found employment within six months or less. Thirty-five percent found employment in six months or less, related to their field of study.

Forty-four percent of the graduates surveyed are making over $15,000 per year and seventeen percent are making over $23,000 per year. Forty-one percent of those surveyed have completed additional education. The researchers attempted to get information on nondisabled students' post graduate information, but were told that there had been such a poor response that the information was invalid. A follow-up study is recommended to see how long these students have retained employment or have moved onto another position. ■

Editor's Note: Janet Jenkins is the Learning Disabilities Coordinator in the Office for Students with Disabilities at Edinboro University.

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PRISM

A Systematic Approach for Assisting Students with Learning Disabilities in Postsecondary Education

BY PEGGY WALLERT AND CAROL PUFFER

How to achieve the goal of being, "beyond the law but within the budget" with regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act is a current dilemma facing many postsecondary schools. Physical accommodations such as ramps and door handles have been purchased and installed but attitudes and policies regarding modification also need to be addressed campus wide.

The largest group of students with disabilities entering postsecondary programs is those with learning disabilities. Despite this fact, this is the group for whom the least amount of modification has been implemented. Learning disabilities have been referred to as "hidden" disabilities, which probably explains the main reason for this disparity.

A second explanation is the fact that this is not a homogeneous group. Each person with a learning disability is unique in the various modifications needed. What may work as an accommodation for one person may not be appropriate or useful for another—it may even prove to be a barrier to learning. However, Smith (1983) found that students with learning disabilities are more likely to have poor self-concepts, and a lack of appropriate self-advocacy skills. These difficulties, along with the changes that occur from secondary to postsecondary schools, compound already difficult transitions for many students. There are some general principles that have proven to be extremely helpful in assisting person with learning disabilities to maximize their potential in the postsecondary setting. By implementing these forms of assistance, institutions may meet the aforementioned criteria of being "beyond the law but within the budget."

Our acronym for a system of assisting students with learning disabilities is PRISM.

P: Planning
R: Reinforcement
I: Insight
S: Self-advocacy
M: Modifications and accommodations

PLANNING

In a recent article discussing retention of students in postsecondary institutions, Erickson & Strommer (1991) suggest that the cultural changes in the past two to three decades and the resulting change in student experiences, academic accomplishments and expectations have created a gap between the student's and institution's match in perceptions and expectations. Efforts by institutions to reach out to these students to help them form positive perceptions of themselves and the school should help in the overall retention rate of students. With the great influx of students with learning disabilities into the postsecondary educational setting it becomes even more important for institutions to respond appropriately to their needs.

All freshmen need orientation, but the student with learning disabilities may need special assistance with the basics. An on-site program providing direct help with terminology, campus locations, coordinating course requirements with book purchases, schedule, registration, financial aid, etc., would provide this assistance. One program in Wisconsin (Tindal, 1980) even offered assistance in daily living skills (e.g., opening a checking account).

REINFORCEMENT

Students in general are unaware of the tremendous change from high school to college in regard to self direction. The chart below from Brinckerhoff,

Shaw, and McGuire (1991) shows the differences in requirements. Many students with learning disabilities may feel they no longer need accommodations once they leave high school. Unfortunately, they may not seek available support until they are overwhelmed. Providing classes, in general, study skills, videos, and opportunities to visit with upperclassmen can serve as positive intervention and reinforcement. Many campus services are available for all students, regardless of disclosure of need, but they are often overlooked by the student with learning disabilities.

INSIGHT

It is essential for the student with learning disabilities to understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Neubert and Foster (1985) found that students with learning disabilities who participated in postsecondary transition programs had limited awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. This includes knowing how they learn, best classroom environment for them, best test taking method and study style. Gavin and Colleagues (1990) have suggested several techniques for the various learning styles. Appropriate time-frames need to be illustrated for accessing services like proof-reading. Methods for

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS

	HIGH SCHOOL	COLLEGE
CLASS TIME	6 hours *per day,* 180 days Total? 1,080 hours!	12 hours *per week,* 28 weeks Total? 336 hours
STUDY TIME	Whatever it takes to do your homework! 1-2 hours per day?	Rule of thumb: 2 hours of study for 1 hour of class. 3-4 hours per day?
TESTS	Weekly; at the end of the chapter frequent quizzes.	2-4 per semester; at the end of a four-chapter unit; at 8:00 am on the Monday *after* Homecoming!
GRADES	*Passing* grades guarantee you a seat!	Satisfactory academic standing = C's or above!
TEACHERS	Often take attendance May check your notebooks Put information on the blackboard Impart knowledge and facts	Rarely teach you the textbook Often lecture nonstop Require library research Challenge you to think
FREEDOM	*Structured* defines it most of the time! Limits are set: by parents, by teachers, or by other adults	The single greatest problem most college students face! Should I go to class? Should I plan on 4, 5, 6, or 10 hours of sleep?

The largest group of students with disabilities entering postsecondary programs is those with learning disabilities

planning and organization also need to be emphasized.

SELF-ADVOCACY

The ability to access services and accommodations for oneself in the postsecondary setting requires specific pragmatic language skills. Prior to this time, others (parents, teachers, counselors) have been the principal advocates for most students with learning disabilities. Positive phrases for self disclosure, talking with professors, and learning how to express oneself assertively are all skills that will be useful in the college experience for students with learning disabilities. Social and communication innuendoes may otherwise get a student off to a poor start (Getzel & Gugerty, 1992).

MODIFICATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Once the student with learning disabilities understands where his/her difficulties lie, it will probably be necessary to suggest actual accommodations for the specific learning disabilities to the instructors. Although instructors may be willing to make modifications, they will want to know it's not going to "water down" the curriculum. They may request specific examples of the types of modifications necessary to comfortably respond to these asked for accommodations. The changes made by teachers to accommodate individual students generally enhance the class for all students. By offering students a variety of ways to learn material, all students may learn more effectively (Scheiber & Talpers, 1987).

CONCLUSION

Federal mandates of Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act state that for postsecondary institutions, "whether or not an accommodation is to be made is not negotiable. How an accommodation is to be made is negotiable" (King & Jarrow, 1990). The PRISM approach addresses the wide variety of needs of these students with learning disabilities and helps to maximize their potential for success in postsecondary education in a very cost effective way. In conjunction with a program directed at students, institutions need to provide an orientation for professionals regarding the unique needs of this population of students. This type of program should address the following areas: definition and divergent needs of students with learning disabilities, requirement ethics, simulations related to the need for accommodations and modifications in the classroom, ideas for campus wide support systems for students with learning disabilities. Both the student and professional PRISM programs assist post-secondary institutions in accomplishing the goal of being "beyond the law but within the budget." ■

Editor's Note: Peggy Wallert is the Project Coordinator for the federally funded LD-CASE PROJECT at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and a former special education teacher. Carol Puffer is the LD-CASE Learning Disabilities Specialist at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

References for this article are available from NCLD.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

NCLD Policy: NCLD is pleased to present to THEIR WORLD readers messages from a number of providers of services for individuals with learning disabilities. It is NCLD's policy, however, not to recommend or endorse any one specific program, speaker, school or instructional material or technique.

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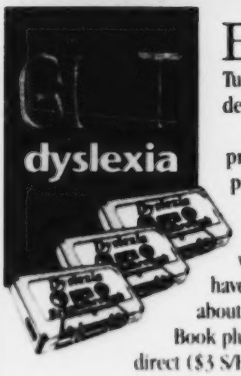

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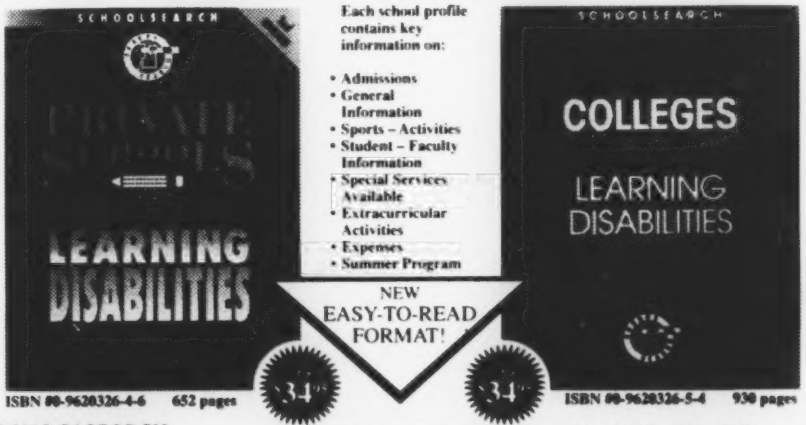

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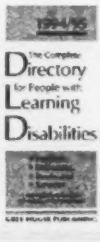

Associations, Schools, Camps, Programs, Newsletters, Parent Guides and More, all listed in this comprehensive resource.

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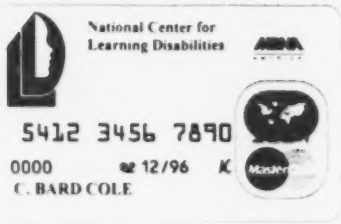

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122

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NCLD'S RESOURCE LIST

This year marks the introduction of a largely expanded Resource List comprised of national organizations, Federal laws, books, videos and topical resources. A special section on TIPS for parents and teachers has been added. Please feel free to duplicate this and distribute as you wish. And please contact us if you have a resource to share for next year's list!

LEARNING DISABILITIES AND THE LAW: A SUMMARY OF CRITICAL FEDERAL LAWS

PL 101-476—The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 (IDEA)
This law essentially replaced the landmark disabilities law named PL 94-142—The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EHA). IDEA mandates a free and appropriate public education for all children with disabilities, in the least restrictive environment. It ensures due process rights when problems arise, and requires Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for each child. It is meant to provide the core of Federal dollars for special education. IDEA expanded the services mandated under the previous law by including autism and traumatic brain injury in its disability categories, by requiring transition services as part of each IEP, and by emphasizing outreach to children with disabilities from minority backgrounds.

PL 102-119—The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1991
This law addresses the preschool child with disabilities, and amends Part H of the EHA Amendments of 1986. It establishes early intervention programs for children with developmental delays, aged birth to five years. It also permits funds for programs targeted at infants and toddlers at risk for developmental delays, especially in low income, rural, minority and other underserved populations.

PL 93-112—The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (amended by 4 other public laws)
This law primarily serves adults and youth transitioning into employment settings. Its goal is to develop and implement a comprehensive and coordinated program of vocational assistance and independent living for individuals with disabilities, to maximize their employability and integration into the community.

Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, a civil rights provision, has been very useful for parents seeking services and school accommodations for their children with disabilities, who were denied such services under IDEA. This has proven particularly true for ADD/ADHD children.

PL 101-336—The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
This landmark law guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, telecommunications, and state and local government services. ADA is the most significant Federal law assuring full civil rights of individuals with disabilities. This law mandates "reasonable accommodations" for individuals with disabilities.

PL 103-227—Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994)
This law establishes a new framework for the Federal government to provide assistance to states to reform educational programs to meet today's higher demands. It is meant to help states establish high standards for all children, including children with disabilities, to reshape testing to assure these standards are met, and to ease rules and regulations so efforts are concentrated on results, not just compliance. It established eight National Education Goals for ALL children.

PL 89-10—The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (amended by 7 other public laws)
This law represents the first Federal commitment to the improvement of education. The core of the act authorized a multibillion dollar aid program to assist states in educating children from low income families who were considered educationally deprived. During subsequent amendments, "educationally disadvantaged" children were defined to include children with disabilities. A substantial amount of monies allocated through this law are associated with Chapter One grants, to children of low income families. This law provides an array of programs to help schools have all children attain the high standards imposed by Goals 2000.

Call NCLD for a full listing of relevant Federal laws.

LEARNING DISABILITIES ORGANIZATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD):
381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1420, New York, NY 10016. Telephone: 212/545-7510.
A national non-profit membership organization which offers a free Information & Referral Service, conducts educational programs, raises public awareness of LD, and advocates for improved legislation and services for those with LD.

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA):
4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234.
Telephone: 412/341-1515.
A national non-profit membership organization, with state and local affiliates, that conducts an annual conference, provides information and publishes numerous publications and resources.

Orton Dyslexia Society (ODS):
Chester Building, 8600 La Salle Road, Suite 382, Baltimore, MD 21204. Telephone: 410/296-0232.
An international non-profit membership organization offering leadership in language programs, research and publications all relating to dyslexia. Chapters are located in most states.

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)—Division of Learning Disabilities (DLD)
1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589.
Telephone: 800/328-0272 or 703/620-3660.
A non-profit membership organization that has 17 specialized divisions each focusing on a specific exceptionality or special education interest. DLD is the division dedicated to LD. Provides free information and holds conferences, primarily for professionals.

Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD):
P.O. Box 40303, Overland Park, KS 66204.
Telephone: 913/492-8755.
A national organization dedicated solely to professionals working with individuals who have LD. The Learning Disability Quarterly, focusing on research and its applications, is available through CLD.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC):
323 Chapel Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 7Z2. Telephone: 613/238-5721.
A Canadian non-profit membership organization, with provincial and territorial offices, that conducts programs and provides information for LD children and adults in Canada.

ADD/ADHD

Children and Adults with ADD (CH.A.D.D.):
499 NW 70th Avenue, #308, Plantation, FL 33317.
Telephone: 305/587-3700.
A national non-profit membership organization that serves children and adults with ADD and their families, via support groups, meetings, information and advocacy.

The Attention Deficit Information Network, Inc. (AD-IN):
475 Hillside Avenue, Needham, MA 02194.
Telephone: 617/455-9895.
A non-profit volunteer organization that offers support and information to families of children and adults with ADD, and to professionals.

The National Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA):
PO Box 972, Mentor, OH 44061.
Telephone: 800/487-2282.
A national coalition serving as a connection to support groups around the nation. ADDA provides materials on ADD and related issues.

LOCAL ADVOCACY SUPPORT

Parent Training and Information Projects (PTIs):
A federally funded organization that provides local resources and advocacy training for disability and special education issues. For a PTI in your state call NCLD or contact: Federation for Children with Special Needs, 95 Berkeley Street, #104, Boston, MA 02116. Telephone: 617/482-2915.

Local chapters of LDA and CHADD. Call the national offices for a location nearest you.

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA):
10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852.
Telephone: 800/638-8255.
A membership organization serving speech pathologists and audiologists. Provides information and referrals to the public.

Association of Educational Therapists (AET):
14852 Ventura Blvd., Suite 207, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403. Telephone: 818/788-3850.
A national professional membership organization for educational therapists. Provides referrals to local educational therapists.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC):
1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1589.
Telephone: 800/328-0272 or 703/264-9474.
An information clearinghouse funded by the federal government and hosted by the Council for Exceptional Children. Provides free information.

International Reading Association (IRA):
800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139. Telephone: 302/731-1600.
A non-profit educational organization dedicated to improving the teaching of reading and promoting literacy worldwide.

National Association of Private Schools for Exceptional Children (NAPSEC):
1522 K Street NW, Suite 1032, Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: 202/408-3338.
Provides a referral service, publications and conferences for persons interested in private special education placements.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY):
1875 Connecticut Avenue, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20009. Telephone: 800/695-0285.
An information clearinghouse that provides free information on disabilities and disability-related issues.

National Parent Network on Disabilities (NPND):
1600 Prince Street, Suite 115, Alexandria, VA 22314. Telephone: 703/684-6763.
A membership organization open to all agencies, organizations, parent centers, parent groups, professionals, and all individuals concerned with the quality of life for people with disabilities.

GIFTED/LD

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC):
1155 15th Street NW, Suite 1002,
Washington, DC 20005. Telephone: 202/785-4268.
An advocacy organization which ensures that gifted children receive the best possible education. Provides information to educators, administrators and parents.

Parents of Gifted/LD Children, Inc.:
2420 Eccleston Street, Bethesda, MD 20902.

SUMMER CAMPS

Resources for Children with Special Needs:
200 Park Avenue South, Suite 816, New York, NY 10003. Telephone: 212/677-4650.
Provides listing of summer camps for children with special needs.

Learning Disabilities Association of America:
4156 Library Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15234
Telephone: 412/341-1515.
Provides directory of summer camps by state.

American Camping Association:
5000 State Road, 67 North Martinsdale, IN 46151.
Telephone: 800/428-CAMP.
Provides listing of special summer camps.

HOMESCHOOLING

Homeschool Legal Defense Association:
P.O. Box 159, Paeonian Springs, VA 22129.
Telephone: 703/338-5600.
A membership organization that offers legal assistance for homeschooling issues.

National Homeschool Association (NHA):
PO Box 157290, Cincinnati, OH 45215-7290.
Telephone: 513/772-9580
A non-profit membership organization that provides a $3.00 information packet with state support groups and names of relevant magazines, books and organizations for homeschooling.

BOOKS ON TAPES

Recording for the Blind (RFB):
20 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540.
Telephone: 609/452-0606.
A national non-profit organization that provides taped educational books free on loan, books on diskette, library services and other educational and professional resources. 75% of their clients have learning disabilities.

Library of Congress—National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS-BPH): 1291 Taylor Street NW, Washington, DC 20542. Telephone: 800/424-8567.
Provides books on tape that are available to children and adults documented as learning disabled.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES

US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS):
Switzer Building, 330 C Street SW, Washington, DC 20202. Telephone: 202/205-5507. Contact this office for information on your rights and for the Vocational Rehabilitiation Agency in your state.

State Departments of Education:
Contact your State Department of Education directly (in your state capital) and ask for the Director of Special Education. Ask for state IDEA implementation requirements and regulations. Call information or NCLD for your State Department's telephone number.

Office of Civil Rights (OCR):
US Department of Education, OCR, 330 C Street, S.W., Suite 5000, Washington, DC 20202-1100.
Telephone: 202/205-5413.
To file a formal civil rights complaint, (a Section 504 complaint) contact this office for the regional office servicing your area.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Children's SSI Campaign:
202/467-5730. Disabled children can get SSI support depending on disability conditions and family income level. Call for more information.

Social Security Administration:
800/772-1213. Administers the SSI Program. Also called the Supplemental Security Income Program.

Federal Student Aid Information Hotline: 800/433-3243.

The Foundation Center: 800/424-9836.
Call to locate a local Foundation Center to research private foundations interested in scholarships; often libraries can be a valuable resource also.

LEARNING DISABILITIES ORGANIZATIONS FOR LD ADULTS

National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (National ALLD Center):
c/o Academy for Educational Development,
1875 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 800,
Washington, DC 20009-1202.
Telephone: 202/884-8185.
A non-profit organization established by the National Institute for Literacy, which provides information regarding LD and the impact on the provision of literacy services. Also provides technical assistance in current best practices in LD, to literacy providers and practitioners.

National Center for Law and Learning Disabilities (NCLLD):
PO Box 368, Cabin John, MD 20818.
Telephone: 301/469-8308.
A non-profit organization providing services to assist adults with LD and ADD, their families, educators, employers, and professionals. Services include education, advocacy, analysis of legal issues and policy recommendations. Has resource materials available.

REBUS Institute:
1499 Bayshore Blvd., Suite 416, Burlingame,
CA 94010. Telephone: 415/697-7424.
A national non-profit research institute devoted to the study and dissemination of information on adult issues related to ADD and LD, through conferences and newsletters.

ADD/ADHD

ADDult Support Network:
20620 Ivy Place, Toledo, OH 43613.
A volunteer organization affiliated with the ADDA. This group refers individuals to a local ADD support group in their area. Anyone requesting this information is asked to send a self-addressed stamped envelope.

RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

HEATH Resource Center (Higher Education and Adult Training for People with Handicaps):
One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC
20036. Telephone: 800/544-3284.
A national clearinghouse that provides free information on postsecondary education and related issues, for individuals with disabilities.

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN):
PO Box 716, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.
Telephone: 610/525-8336.
A non-profit organization designed to organize, establish and promote an effective national and international coalition of professionals and advocates for the purpose of educating adults with special learning needs. Has newsletter and holds meetings.

National Clearinghouse on ESL Literacy Education (NCLE):
Center for Applied Linguistics,
1118 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20037.
Telephone: 202/429-9292.
An organization focusing on literacy education for adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language.

EMPLOYMENT ISSUES/AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

ADA Information Hotline:
The Great Lakes Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center, 354 S. Broad Street,
Trenton, NJ 08608. Telephone: 800/949-4232.
Provides technical assistance, information services and outreach regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

ADA Information Line (U.S. Department of Justice):
202/514-0301 or 800/514-0301.
Answers questions on Title II (public services) and Title III (public accommodations) of the ADA, by providing materials and technical assistance.

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):
1801 L Street NW, #9024, Washington, DC 20507.
Telephone: 202/663-4900.
The key federal agency for the implementation of Title I (employment) of the ADA.

Job Accommodation Network:
West Virginia University, PO 6080, Morgantown, WV 26506. Telephone: 800/232-9675.
An international information network and consulting resource that provides information about employment issues to employers, rehabilitation professionals and persons with disabilities.

Mainstream, Inc.:
3 Bethesda Metro Center, Suite 830,
Bethesda, MD 20814. Telephone: 301/654-2400.
A non-profit organization that works with employers and service providers to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and provides technical assistance on compliance with the ADA.

President's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities (PCEPD):
1331 F Street NW, Washington, DC 20004.
Telephone: 202/376-6200.
An independent federal agency whose mission is to facilitate the communication, coordination and promotion of public and private efforts to empower Americans with disabilities through employment.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD, formerly AHSSPPE):
PO Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221.
Telephone: 614/488-4972.
An international organization of professionals commited to full participation in higher education for persons with disabilities. AHEAD offers training programs, workshops, publications and conferences.

The General Educational Development Testing Service (GEDTS):
One Dupont Circle, Suite 250,
Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202/939-9490.
Administers the GED Tests and provides information on disability-related adaptations/accommodations for the GED Tests to prospective examinees and instructors.

Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies: Contact US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) for the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency in your state. Switzer Building, 330 C Street SW, Washington, DC 20202. Telephone: 202/205-5482.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Independent Living Research Utilization Program (ILRU):
2323 S. Shepherd, Suite 1000,
Houston, TX 77019. Telephone: 713/520-0232.
A national resource center for independent living. Produces resource materials, develops and conducts training programs on independent living issues and publishes a monthly newsletter.

National Council of Independent Living Programs (NCIL):
211 Wilson Blvd., Suite 405, Arlington, VA 22210.
Telephone: 703/525-3406.
A cross-disability grassroots national organization run by and for people with disabilities. Provides referrals to independent living facilities around the nation.

LITERACY/LD

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA):
5795 Widewaters Parkway, Syracuse, NY 13214
Telephone: 315/445-8000.
A national non-profit organization with 400 affiliate literacy programs in 40 states for adult learners.

National Institute for Literacy (NIFL):
800 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 200,
Washington, DC 20006. Telephone: 202/632-1500.
A non-profit organization that provides leadership in the literacy field through advocacy, information sharing and collaboration.

PLUS, Project Literacy U.S.:
4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.
Telephone: 412/622-1491.
A non-profit organization that promotes volunteer tutoring programs, and provides training for volunteer trainers who assist adults with learning deficiencies.

SCHOOL TESTING ISSUES

COLLEGE/GRADUATE SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

Students with documented learning disabilities can apply for special college/graduate school entrance testing. Options include untimed tests, tests on tape or in braille, test reading by a counselor or tutor, and more. For more information contact:

ACT Special Testing:
P.O. Box 4028, Iowa City, IA 52243-4028.
Telephone: 319/337-1332.

Association on Higher Education (AHEAD):
PO Box 21192, Columbus, OH 43221-0192.
Telephone: 614/488-4972.

Educational Testing Service (ETS):
Rosedale Road, Princeton, NJ 08541.
Telephone: 609/921-9000.
Tests include: SAT, GRE, GMAT.

Law School Administration Council:
P.O. Box 2000, Newtown, PA 18940-0098.
Telephone: 215/968-1001.
Administers the LSAT.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

Students with documented LD who take the ERB tests for private schools can also obtain appropriate accommodations. Contact: **Educational Record Bureau:** 1410 W. 65th Street, New York, NY 10023. Telephone: 212/873-9108.

COLLEGE RESOURCES

Dispelling the Myths: College Students and Learning Disabilities (by Katherine Garnett and Sandra La Porta, 1990). A monograph for students and educators that explains what learning disabilities are and what faculty members can do to help students with learning disabilities succeed in college. Call NCLD at 212/545-7510.

Assisting College Students with Learning Disabilities: A Tutor's Manual (by Pamela Adelman and Debbie Olufs). Call AHEAD at 614/488-4972.

The College Student with a Learning Disability: A Handbook (by Susan Vogel, 1985). A handbook about college related issues, including Section 504, for students with learning disabilities and all college personnel. Call LDA at 412/341-1515.

K & W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled, a state by state guide by Marybeth Kravets and Imy Wax (HarperCollins, NY, 1994). Call NCLD.

Peterson's Guide to Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities, a state by state guide, 4th Edition (Peterson's Guides, NJ, 1994). Call NCLD.

SchoolSearch Guide to Colleges with Programs or Services for Students with Learning Disabilities, a state by state guide by Midge Lipkin (SchoolSearch Press, MA,1994). Telephone: 617/489-5785.

Unlocking Potential: College and Other Choices for Learning Disabled People: A Step-by-Step Guide (by Barbara Scheiber, 1987). A book that assists the reader through the postsecondary selection process. Call Woodbine House at 800/843-7323.

RESOURCES ON EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Guidelines for Supervising Employees with Learning Disabilities: A Manual for Employers (Elaine Reisman, 1993). Call NCLD at 212/545-7510.

Learning Disabilities and the Workplace (LDA of Canada, 1993). Call LDAC at 613/238/5721.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

ABLEDATA-REHAB DATA (National Rehabilitation Information Center): 8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Telephone: 301/588-9284. The ABLEDATA database contains descriptions of more than 20,000 commercially available computer products for individuals with disabilities.

Closing The Gap: PO Box 68, Henderson, MN 56044. Telephone: 612/248-3294. Publishes a comprehensive newsletter on disability and technology; conducts an annual conference for existing and new vendors.

The following companies develop and sell computer hardware and/or software for individuals with disabilities:

Franklin Learning Resources: Telephone: 800/525-9673.

IBM Independence Series Information Center: Telephone: 407/443-2000 or 800/426-4832.

Laureate Learning Systems, Inc.: Telephone: 800/562-6801.

Lexia Learning Systems, Inc.: Telephone: 617/259-8752.

Randolph Educational Services: Telephone: 201/328-1512.

WordScholar, Henter-Joyce, Inc.: Telephone: 813/528-8900.

Worldwide Disability Solutions Group: Apple Computer Inc. Telephone: 408/974-7910.

Xerox Imaging Systems, Inc.: Telephone: 800/248-6550 or 508/977-2000.

VIDEO TAPES AND AUDIO TAPES

We Can Learn: Understanding and Helping Children with Learning Disabilities: A 50-minute, five part video series about children with LD produced by NCLD, along with WNBC, New York. An important video, with manual, for parents, teachers and professionals. Available from NCLD for $39.95 + $3.95 postage and handling. Contact: NCLD, 381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1420, New York, NY 10016. Telephone: 212/545-7510.

Gifts of Greatness: An inspiring one-hour musical/drama video highlighting the lives of great people who overcame dyslexia, starring Ed Asner, Danny Thomas and others. Available for $125.00 + $15.00 handling. Contact Educators Publishing Service, 75 Moulton Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. Telephone: 800/225-5750.

Homework and Learning Disabilities: A 34-minute video offering practical techniques for the solution to many homework problems. Clarifies responsibility between teachers, students and parents. Video is available for $99.00, $45.00 rental. Contact The Menninger Clinic and Center for Learning Disabilities, Box 829, Topeka, KS 66601-0820. Telephone: 800/345-6036.

How Difficult Can This Be? F.A.T. CITY: A video by educator Rick Lavoie, F.A.T. CITY is an exploration into the world of difficulties faced by children with learning disabilities by recreating the LD experience first-hand. The video is available for $39.95 prepaid, plus shipping and handling. Contact: CACLD, 18 Marshall St., South Norwalk, CT 06854. Telephone: 203/838-5010.

I'm Not Stupid: A 53-minute video that introduces and gives an overview of the nature of learning disabilities of children and adults. Video is $22.00 + 10% postage and handling. Contact: LDA, 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15234. Telephone: 412/341-1515.

Last One Picked...First One Picked On: (parent and teacher versions) Another video by educator Rick Lavoie addresses the social problems children with learning disabilities face and offers some practical solutions for teachers and parents. The video is available for $49.95 + $8.50 shipping and handling. Contact: Public Broadcasting Service. Telephone: 800/344-3337.

Lab School Audio Series: a collection of audiotapes featuring 12 of the most popular programs from The Lab School Lecture Series for parents and professionals. Topics include: social problems of children with LD, controversies about ADD and treatment, confidence in parenting, etc. For a complete listing and more information, contact The Lab School. Telephone: 202/965-6600.

LD Stories: Lab School Day School: A 7-minute videotape by Lab School students about what it is like having learning disabilities via the medium of animation. For more information, contact The Lab School. Telephone: 202/965-6600.

Understanding Attention Deficit Disorder: A 45-minute videotape discussing ADD in children and adults, produced by Simon Epstein, MD. Video is available for $24.70 through CACLD. Contact: CACLD, 18 Marshall St., South Norwalk, CT 06854. Telephone: 203/838-5010.

BOOKS FOR PARENTS, PROFESSIONALS AND ADULTS WITH LD

Armstrong, T. *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Personal Learning Style.* Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1987.

Baum, Susan M., Ph.D., Owen, Steve V., Ph.D., Dixon, John, Ph.D. *To Be Gifted & Learning Disabled.* Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.

Bloom, Jill. *Help Me To Help My Child.* Waltham, MA: Little Brown and Company, 1990.

Bogin, Matthew B. and Goodman, Beth. *Representing Learning Disabled Children: A Manual for Attorneys.* American Bar Association, 1985. (Call NCLD)

Brooks, Robert. *The Self-Esteem Teacher.* Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, 1991.

Chall, J. *Learning to Read: The Great Debate.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.

Cordoni, B. *Living with a Learning Disability.* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.

Cummings, Rhoda W. and Madux, Cleborne D. *Parenting the Learning Disabled: A Realistic Approach.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1985.

Dane, Elizabeth. *Painful Passages: Working with Children with Learning Disabilities.* Silver Spring, MD: NASW Press, 1990.

Dias, Peggy S. *Diamonds in the Rough.* East Aurora, NY: Slosson Educational Publications, Inc., 1989.

Fowler, M.C. *Maybe You Know My Kid: A Parent's Guide to Identifying, Understanding and Helping Your Child with ADHD.* New York: Birch Lane Press, 1990.

Greene, L.J. *Kids Who Hate School: A Survival Handbook on Learning Disabilities.* New York: Fawcett Book Group, 1987.

Grey House Publishing. *The Complete Learning Disabilities Directory: A Comprehensive Guide to LD Resources.* Lakeville, CT, 1994.

Hallowell, Edward M., MD. and Ratey, John, MD. *Driven to Distraction. Recognizing and Coping with ADD, from Childhood through Adulthood.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Hallowell, Edward M., MD. and Ratey, John, MD. *Answers to Distraction.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Hampshire, Susan. *Susan's Story.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

Jones, Clare B., Ph.D. *Sourcebook for Children with Attention Deficit Disorder: A Management Guide for Early Childhood Professionals and Parents.* Tucson, AZ: Communication Skill Builders, 1991.

Kelly, Kate and Ramundo, Peggy. *You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid, or Crazy?!.* Cincinnati, OH: Tyrell & Jerem Press, 1993.

Learning Disabilities Council, Inc. *Understanding Learning Disabilities: A Parent Guide and Workbook.* Richmond, VA. 1991.

Lelewer, Nancy. *Something's Not Right: One Family's Struggle with Learning Disabilities.* Acton, MA: VanderWyk & Burnham, 1994.

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To have books put on tape, contact: Recording for the Blind (RFB): 20 Roszel Road, Princeton, NJ 08540. Telephone: 609/452-0606.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM NCLD'S NATIONAL INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICE

The following packets are available free of charge:

General Packet on LD
ADD/ADHD
General Packet for LD Adults
ADD/ADHD for LD Adults
College Issues
Recent Research Findings
Legal Rights
Dyscalculia
Dysgraphia
Dyspraxia
Visual Perception
Social Skills/Self-Esteem
Reprint Series for Parents
Reprint Series for Teachers
NCLD's National Summit Report (1995)
TIPS Series
Gifted/LD
JD/LD Link
The Evaluation Process
Choosing the Right School
Issues on Inclusion
Regional Resource Listings

Call NCLD for additional topical packets. LD and ADD packets will be available in Spanish starting July, 1995. ■

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NCLD TIPS

ADVOCATING EFFECTIVELY FOR YOUR CHILD

Many parents, when first facing the idea that their child has a learning disability, become anxious (or even angry) and wonder what they can do. Learning to be a strong advocate is a positive, and necessary, way to use your energy and help your child. The following TIPS are suggestions to help you advocate effectively.

1. Know your legal rights:

■ Parents' and children's legal rights extend throughout the entire process for receiving special education services, from initial evaluations to planning the types of services and accommodations to be received. Remember your child's two primary rights:

(a) free evaluation, and

(b) appropriate services/accommodations, in the least restrictive environment.

■ A copy of your rights under Federal law can be obtained from NCLD. Contact your school, State Department of Education or local advocacy groups for any additional rights and/or regulations that exist under state or local law.

2. Become involved with the school:

■ Regular and consistent communication with your child's teacher is an important way to monitor your child's progress and insure that concerns are dealt with as they arise, rather than being allowed to escalate or go unattended. Include your child in this partnership.

■ Be sure to share your own observations about your child's strengths, weaknesses, and behaviors at home. This can often provide valuable context for behaviors observed at school. Communication between teacher and parent should always be a two-way sharing of information.

■ Regular communication and meetings with school personnel sends the message to both your child and the school that your child's education is something you value highly and in which you will be an active participant.

3. Listen to your child—understand her difficulties and needs:

■ While children don't always go bounding off to school in the morning, a child's feelings about school often provide valuable insight about the level of difficulty, ease, and satisfaction with which your child experiences school. Frequent complaints of boredom or illness (headaches, stomachaches, etc.) often mask other difficulties in school.

4. Learn all you can about learning disabilities:

■ Read as much as you can about LD and related issues. Visit your library and call NCLD for a variety of free articles from our Information & Referral Service. Request all relevant information available from your school district and your State Department of Education.

5. Contact national advocacy organizations and local support groups:

■ In addition to the personal comfort they can provide, these groups can be a great help in providing information about specific issues and other services in your area, such as additional rights you may have, other's experiences with the school or district, what services are available and effective means for gaining services. Call NCLD for a list of local resources in your area. ■

KNOW EARLY WARNING SIGNALS IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

If learning disabilities are present, early intervention can make a substantial difference in a child's development, self-esteem, and school experiences. While there is valid concern of "mislabelling" a very young child, early attention and careful observation will ultimately reduce this risk, while ensuring that very real concerns do not go unheeded.

Knowing the early warning signs and factors which put children at risk for learning difficulties can be crucial in the early detection of these difficulties. Here are several TIPS that may be helpful to parents and professionals of preschool children.

1. Consider any environmental issues related to the child: These could include but are not limited to: low birth weight; drug or alcohol use during pregnancy; medical complications during pregnancy or childbirth; pre-natal consumption/ ingestion of lead; and/or child consumption/ ingestion of lead.

2. Observe and record any behavioral characteristics of the child: One of the most consistent factors among LD children is marked unevenness in development. While we all have certain strengths and weakness, these differences are usually pronounced in the preschool and school-aged LD child. Parents should be cautious, however, in making hasty judgements because significant developmental variations exist among *all* children.

Some differences include, but are not limited to:

- **Language**: may be slow in development of speech; has difficulty learning new vocabulary and later using two and three word phrases; speech is difficult to understand; does not seem to understand directions or questions; or has difficulty expressing wants or needs.
- **Motor**: has difficulty with manipulating small objects, with balance or awkwardness, with cutting, drawing, climbing or running; or displays general clumsiness.
- **Social**: has disinterest or difficulty interacting with peers; may be either overly aggressive or withdrawn; or may have sudden and extreme mood changes, ie., tantrums or uncontrollable crying when frustrated (lability).
- **Cognitive**: has difficulty understanding cause and effect, with sequencing and one-to-one correspondence, with concept of place (on, under, over), or with concept of attribute (size, shape, color).
- **Self-help skills**: has difficulty with dressing and eating.
- **Attention**: is easily distracted; acts impulsively; or displays poor organization skills.

3. Seek an evaluation: If you observe multiple delays or suspect a problem, you can have the child tested in order to obtain services and specific interventions. Call your local Board of Education and/or the State Department of Education for information on free evaluations by qualified professionals of a preschool assessment team. All screening and identification programs should be interdisciplinary and based on reliable and valid procedures.

4. Check credentials: If you are seeking the help of a private diagnostician, be sure to check the person's credentials. Call NCLD for your local chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) or PTI (Parent Training and Information Service).

5. A few ways to help: Although this is just a beginning, here are a few ways you can help your child:

- It is never too early, or too late, to start reading to your child. The more your child hears our spoken language, and sees our written language, the better. Rhyming books and songs are excellent learning tools!
- Look for patterns in your child's development. Where you see similar behavioral characteristics in different situations, that would be cause for further evaluation.
- Become knowledgeable and involved in your child's activities on a continuous basis. Adapt normal daily routines to specifically address deficit areas you recognize.
- Learn as much as you can about normal and atypical child development. Go to the library or call NCLD. ■

GENERAL TIPS FOR PARENTS AT HOME

Parents have a pivotal role in encouraging the development of healthy self-esteem and in reinforcing home and school learning. The following TIPS offer practical pointers which can help you and your child.

1. Give your child a household task to do. Make it simple. It will help build confidence and responsibility and make the child feel that he is making a contribution to the family.

2. Be clear with directions and explanations when working with your child. Consider using short lists of tasks. Break complex tasks into smaller steps.

3. Try to be consistent in routines. Have a set time for play, meals and bedtime. A structured environment works in school and at home.

4. Allow time for friends. Social development is as important as academic success.

5. Turn off the TV during the school week. It's easier than negotiating about it every day.

6. Be patient with reminders. Forgetfulness is not intentional. You will be repeating yourself.

7. Reward work done well. The reward should be small, appropriate and immediate.

8. Develop a sense of humor. You'll need it, and so will your child.

9. Try not to nag.

10. Don't spoil your child. This will only make things worse.

11. Read to your child—as much as possible.

12. Remember yourselves—don't have a child-driven home.

13. Be firm—establish clear ground rules and be consistent with your discipline.

14. Praise, praise, praise! There is never too much praise for an LD child.

15. Breaks from special instruction and tutoring are sometimes necessary. Consider periods of time off in the summer or other holiday times. However, extended periods of time, such as the entire summer, without instructional support can cause the child to lose ground.

16. Help other family members understand the learning disabilities and some of the consequences. Find ways to involve siblings in a positive manner.

17. It is important to encourage your child in something he does well, such as sports, artwork or other activities.

18. Encourage your child to join social groups like Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts.

19. Try to avoid "quick cures" and "miracle treatments." All children will progress but rates and levels of development vary.

20. Maintain a positive outlook. Our children pick up more cues than we realize.

21. Take one day at a time, and recognize that you are not alone.

22. Learn as much as you can about LD and don't let yourself be intimidated by others. ■

These TIPS have been compiled from NCLD, NCLD-AZ and the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

NCLD TIPS

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Each child is a whole child. Academic performance is not the only issue to be concerned about. Even more important (but closely related), is healthy self-esteem. All too often, children with learning disabilities suffer from low self-esteem. Even as educational remedies are applied, progress will be stilted without healthy self-esteem. More to the point—a child's happiness and belief in herself is by far the most important goal we all should have. Here are a few TIPS on building your child's self-esteem.

1. Set reasonable expectations and help your child set realistic goals.

2. Give your child frequent, specific and positive praise. Rather than say "You're a good kid", say "It was great that you did so well on your test."

3. Appreciate your child. "I really appreciate that you set the table without being asked," or "Thank you, you are a big help to me."

4. Let your child know she is a capable person and acknowledge the difficulty of a task. Research has shown that over 70 percent of what teachers and parents say to children is critical. "That was a difficult report to research and write. The illustrations are fantastic—you really are a good artist."

5. Focus on your child's strengths and affinities. The more your child participates in something she is good at, the more success she will experience. Nothing builds self-esteem like success.

6. Do allow your child to experience *some* frustration—tolerance of frustration is a necessary skill for children to develop.

7. Encourage your child's contributions to the family by letting her know you think she is an important part of the family. "You know it is grandmother's birthday next month—what do you think would be a good present for her from our family?"

8. Teach your child how to accept a compliment. "Thank you" works a whole lot better than "Yeah, I got good grades, but the teacher is really an easy grader." It makes it easier for a person to give a compliment when it is accepted rather than negated.

9. Help your child to be independent. Don't do anything for your child that she can do for herself. Maybe it is easier for you to do it, or it is not perfect, but your child will learn how to do things, and she will get better at it with practice.

10. Teach your child to advocate effectively for herself. In communicating needs and desires, she should be specific, clear and positive.

11. Help your child recognize, label and express her own, and others', feelings.

12. Help your child develop appropriate social skills. Learning how to recognize various facial expressions, body language, and vocal cues, will help her integrate with others and build friendships.

13. Allow for mistakes. Talk about mistakes, even your own. Equate mistakes with effort and learning. Help her understand that everyone makes mistakes. Do not dwell on them.

14. Show your child you love her. Listen to your child. Empathize with her bad experiences; rejoice with her good experiences. Tell your child often that you love her. ■

These TIPS have been compiled from NCLD, NCLD-AZ, the Parent Educational Resource Center (PERC, San Mateo, CA), and the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

GETTING A GOOD START TO THE SCHOOL YEAR

Most children view the end of summer with mixed feelings, but many are happy to be back in school. Many children with learning disabilities, however, face the opening of school with considerable trepidation. For them, the adjustments to new teachers, new levels of work, new expectations, are not always tinged with the excitement of potential new adventures.

A number of youngsters with learning disabilities will have had a summer very little removed from school. Some will have attended summer courses, others will have been tutored regularly and yet others will have been to camps, but camps involving academic activity.

The following TIPS can be helpful to parents and teachers in charting the course of the school year for their children.

1. Provide teachers with helpful information: Teachers in regular education classes, provided with good information, can be particularly helpful to the child with learning disabilities during the first few weeks of school. For many children the first month of school dictates to a large degree their perceived possibility for success throughout the year. If their confidence level remains high after a successful summer they are more likely to persevere and take risks when things become more difficult. If their teacher has convinced them that they will succeed in the class they will continue to work diligently toward that goal.

2. Establish an atmosphere of parent-teacher collaboration: It is important to establish a collaborative effort for the child as soon as possible prior to the school year. The inclusion model in many school districts requires closer communication and cooperation of schools and parents to achieve excellent and appropriate programming for children.

3 Agree upon the child's Individualized Education Program: For children who are continuing services within the school district, parents should expect an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to be in place and agreed upon long before school opens. Parents whose youngsters have not yet begun services should request a meeting with school personnel during the summer to assure appropriate placement. All relevant information concerning the child should be shared by both parents and school. A child's summer experiences may put him at a different level of expertise in a number of areas than he may have demonstrated previously.

4. Attend all meetings: Parents have excellent information to share. They are an integral part of the team which plans for the child's education and should attend all meetings held to determine the best program for the child.

5. Review text books ahead of time: Many youngsters with LD can be helped by an opportunity to look at text books prior to the opening of school, if it is possible. Tutors or parents can sometimes pinpoint areas where the student is likely to encounter difficulty. Some schools and school systems are reluctant to allow this to occur believing that it gives an unfair advantage to the student. Anyone who knows and has worked with an LD student understands that this just evens out the playing field.

6. Begin studying early: The LD student can begin a routine involving some studying time prior to the start of school. This will help the child to make the adjustment to the regular school routine. Many children with learning disabilities find rapid adjustments difficult and it helps them to be able to ease into a new routine.

7. Parent(s) and child—review your mutual expectations: Parent(s) and child can review the general level of expectations during the coming year on various issues like homework, communication amongst them when the going gets rough, tutoring, how much the parent is to help, and under what circumstances the parent will visit with the school and teachers. Prior agreements about these kinds of issues can save considerable grief later on.

Keeping these pointers in mind can make a real difference in the school year success of the child with learning disabilities. ■

HOMEWORK TIPS

All elementary-age children can benefit from their parents' assistance with homework, particularly those children who have learning disabilities. Providing help differs from actually doing the homework; children must do that themselves in order to learn. Every effort should be made to encourage the child's sense of independence. However, parents can have input regarding when, where and how children study at home.

Parents involved in how their child studies are also more able to discover if the child has specific learning difficulties and to provide the support the youngster needs to succeed in school. One sign of learning disabilities is a significant difference in a child's overall intelligence and achievement in one area. For example, if a child loves to read and does so very well, but refuses to do math homework, this may signal that the child has a learning disability that needs special attention.

Ongoing support in this area can have a lasting impact on your child's overall success in school and life. NCLD offers the following TIPS for all parents who want to help their children.

1. Develop a strategy for dealing with homework. It will be one of the biggest issues you must handle. Find a plan that works for you and your family and then stick with it.

2. Show an interest in your child's homework. Ask about the subjects and the work to be done, then follow up the next day.

3. Coach your child with an unknown word or difficult problem, but let the child do the work.

4. Help your child learn to make good decisions and understand limits. This can begin with when and where homework is done.

5. Encourage your child to establish a regular time to do homework.

6. Find a regular place at home for doing the homework. Make sure there is ample lighting, minimal noise, and plenty of room to lay out books and papers.

7. Eliminate as many distractions as possible during study time. Turn off the television and have snacks before the homework begins. Be sure to ask any brothers or sisters to respect this quiet time.

8. Learn the nature of the approach to reading and spelling that your child is being taught, so your coaching can be maximized.

9. Consider two sets of books—one for home and one for school.

10. If a child is having trouble completing all or part of the homework, it is helpful to communicate with her teacher so that the situation can be evaluated and resolved.

11. Depending on the learning disability, consider what's available to help: computers, calculators, spell checkers, books on tape, tutors, etc.

12. Carefully observe how your child is studying at home. Share your insights with the teacher during parent-teacher conferences. (See NCLD TIPS on Parent-Teacher Conferences.)

13. Try to relate the homework to the child's everyday life. For instance, if fractions and measurements are being studied, have the child prepare a favorite foods using the differing measurements.

14. Make sure your child has organized her bookbag or backpack so completed homework can be placed somewhere and not forgotten at home.

15. Praise your child for successfully completing homework. Nothing builds self-esteem like praise from parents. ■

MAXIMIZING YOUR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Children prosper in school when their teacher and parents are able to work together with the mutual interest of the child in mind. Parent-teacher conferences, if utilized effectively, offer a great opportunity for constructive dialogue.

These meetings can help improve the school performance of youngsters with learning disabilities throughout the year. Ongoing communication and cooperation between parent and teacher is especially important in the case of the child with special learning needs.

A get-to-know conference at the beginning of the year can often be helpful—before any problems arise. You may use this time to get to know the teacher's general way of doing things so that you can begin to determine how best to work with this particular teacher. Students in middle and upper schools will often benefit from direct participation in these conferences.When preparing for a parent-teacher conference, the following TIPS can be helpful.

FOR THE PARENT:

1. Keep good records of previous conferences and decisions.

2. Be clear in your observations of your child's changes, improvements or reversals, noting when and under what circumstances they occur. Remember that your experience with your child at home may be different from what is being observed in school.

3. Write down your questions before entering the meeting. Sending them ahead will ensure that the proper research is done. These questions should be geared towards gaining greater understanding of your child's problems and needs in the school setting.

4. Listen. Avoid being accusatory. This leads to retrenched positions which produce only negative results.

5. Keep careful notes and don't be afraid to ask for clarification if you do not understand something which is being said. Be sure, however, not to repeat information over and over again or to spend inordinate time on issues not relevant to the task at hand. This can sometimes become tedious and causes a less than enthusiastic response.

6. Remember that teachers must juggle the unique needs of many students. Be reasonable with your requests. Teachers are not infallible.

7. Acknowledge that the major motivation for success must come from your youngster. Help your child understand this.

8. Summarize plans for next steps, and the role you will play.

FOR THE TEACHER:

1. Write down your questions. The parent will often see the child's behavior in a way you do not.

2. Listen. Avoid being defensive. This leads to suspicion about your ability or willingness to work cooperatively.

3. Take the opportunity to learn as much as you can. Your view of the student may not be as full as it could be. Examine the student's strengths.

4. Remember that parenting is not easy. Be patient with your expectations. Parents have had less formal training for their role than you have had for yours. Parents are not infallible.

5. Explore avenues for improving your skills and understanding of managing and teaching individuals with learning disabilities. Seek out individuals and organizations such as NCLD, who can provide information and steer you to some help.

6. Be prepared to share ideas for the child's improvement.

7. Summarize plans for next steps, and the role you will play. ■

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A CHECKLIST FOR THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

The following list provides a manageable check list of items which require little extra effort by the teacher, but which will help children with learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD to feel more comfortable, and ultimately enhance their learning opportunities. Each item does not necessarily fit uniformly with the specific needs of each individual student. Use the list as a set of guidelines.

1. Seat students with learning differences as near the teacher as possible, but include them as part of the regular classroom. The front row is ideal, away from distractions like windows.

2. Surround students with learning differences with good role models. Encourage peer tutoring and cooperative learning. Consider allowing peer note-taking if writing rapidly is difficult for the LD student.

3. Call their name before addressing them or asking them to recite, and maintain eye contact while speaking with them.

4. Praise their correct and acceptable work, do not just focus on their mistakes.

5. Recognize and give credit for their oral participation in class.

6. If grades on written material are given, consider designating one grade for content, thought and effort and another grade for spelling, punctuation, and handwriting.

7. Allow the opportunity for oral tests in each subject if it will help demonstrate their learning.

8. Encourage their interests and talents by allowing them occasionally to contribute a project instead of a written theme. Find their talents and emphasize whenever possible.

9. Practice spelling words in the order they will be presented on tests. Have the students write the words and spell them aloud.

10. Help your students get organized.

11. Give them an opportunity for extra time on tests by allowing them to return at recess, lunch or after school to complete a test.

12. Make specific arrangements for the complete homework assignments to reach their homes daily, ie., an assignments notebook. They often cannot copy accurately from the board. Encourage parents to set up appropriate study space at home. (See NCLD Homework TIPS.)

13. Allow them to bring a recorder to class on review days. They often cannot write complete notes easily nor read them for study if they do.

14. Do not put them under pressure of time or competition if either can be avoided.

15. Do not ask them to read aloud without preparation.

16. Be cognizant of your own communication styles—is your handwriting on the chalkboard large enough? Neat enough? Do you speak slowly and clearly? Do you use ample visual aids?

17. Know what LD is,and is not—read resource materials on learning disabilities.

18. Follow as structured a schedule as possible; when changes are necessary, try to make transitions between activities as painless as possible. Transitions are often tough for these children. Preparing for transitions, providing structure and warning children in advance that changes are coming are easy ways to begin.

19. Convey a positive attitude about special learners; children take their cues from the teacher's attitudes—you are the primary role model.

20. Be creative—help all students feel comfortable about asking questions. Often children with LD do not like to ask for help.

21. Provide clear and concise instructions. Repeat whenever necessary.

22. Be aware of problems in non-academic areas. Help children learn appropriate social interactions in the same way you teach them grammar and math.

23. Remember, praise always encourages *all* of your students.■

PREPARING YOUR CHILD—AND YOURSELF—FOR SUMMER ACTIVITIES

For most children, summer provides a welcome change of pace and a respite from school. For children with learning disabilities and their families, however, there may be less freedom of choice and fewer options. Academic skills may need strengthening and learning reinforced over the summer.

Whatever summer plans you make, remember that children with learning disabilities are no different from other children in needing free time in the summer to relax and enjoy the normal pleasures of childhood.

When planning summer holidays, a number of factors and options can be considered.

1. Emphasize social opportunities: Summer is an ideal time for social experiences for LD children and adolescents, without the pressures of school.

2. Introduce new activities: A new activity or skill learned in the summer may restore some of the balance in the child's life. Swimming, for example, is an activity that youngsters with LD often do well.

3. Reinforce school-year learning: A summer school program can provide needed reinforcement for youngsters, if appropriate. An alternative is one-to-one tutoring before or after other activities. Summer is a good time for consolidating gains and introducing new concepts.

4. For older students, look into volunteering or paid employment: Older pre-teens and adolescents may be ready for volunteer work in the community or even a paid job. These can heighten a sense of competence and self-worth.

5. Consider camping options: While going away to camp is not possible for all children, some religious groups, Y's or the Scouts have both day and overnight camping facilities. Giving a child with LD the opportunity to go away even for a few days can be great for the child and a rest for parents. Counselors need to be told about the child's problems and strengths, just as teachers do.

For those parents whose children *are* going to camp, especially for the first time, a few pointers can help prepare your child and yourself for the experience.

1. Do not oversell camp: Be positive. Allow your child to talk about his concerns and expectations, but let him take the initiative. His feelings about going will change on a regular basis. Remember that you are sending your child TO camp, not AWAY from home.

2. Do not make promises you are not going to keep: Avoid statements like, "If you really don't like it, you can always come home."

3. Do not set up play dates with bunkmates your child has never met: When kids meet at camp it is in a structured situation, supervised by professionals. If the play date does not work, you may be faced with your child refusing to go if a particular child is going to be in his cabin.

4. Do not plan a trip or special family activity which your child will miss by going to camp: You do not want a child's first camp experience to be in competition with an attractive alternative.

5. Shop together for fun camp equipment: Sports equipment, camping equipment and clothes with the camp logo are fun.

6. Practice using camp vocabulary: Ask the camp director for vocabulary specific to their program. For example, do they eat at the dining room, dining hall or mess hall?

7. If your child is a picky eater, introduce camp food: Get a copy of a weekly camp menu and expose your child to foods that will be served.

8. Communication: Write every day. Send a letter one week before the start of camp so that it is waiting for your child. Reinforce that life at home is, and will be, the same as when they left. Keep phone calls short and positive. Ask questions that will generate positive answers. Follow up with the director on any negative feedback you get. Remember that it may not be accurate. ■

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SOME RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

The Federal government has produced exciting research findings. These projects are administered through the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and its Human Learning and Behavior Branch. While this summary does not represent all of the excellent research taking place, it attempts to translate a significant amount of knowledge scientists have gained with respect to LD. A full packet on research findings is available from NCLD.

NICHD Research Centers and Program Projects are at: Yale University, The University of Colorado, Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, and The Bowman Gray School of Medicine. Since 1975, NICHD support for LD research has surpassed $88 million, with $23 million spent in 1994. Though working separately, these Centers and Projects have achieved consensus on the following.

HOW COMMON IS LD?

■ 15-20 percent of the U.S. population have some form of learning disability, according to the most recent information from the National Institutes of Health.

■ 85-90 percent of school-aged children who manifest learning disabilities have their basic deficits in language and reading.

■ Over half of the children in special education in public schools have learning disabilities (52% in 1992).

■ Girls are just as likely as boys to manifest LD.

HOW DO LEARNING DISABILITIES DEVELOP?

■ LD has a genetic basis and understanding this heritability can aid early identification efforts.

■ Reading disabilities are the most frequently identified type of LD and can have the most negative impact on children's lives, given the tremendous role that literacy plays in all academic areas in school, and also in social and occupational success.

■ The primary causes of difficulties in learning to read are centered around the lack of development of a particular linguistic skill called phonological awareness—the ability to identify the smallest units (phonemes) in words. This ability is required to decode and read single words rapidly and accurately, and subsequently for reading comprehension. (Few teachers know this or are trained to address the problem in their classrooms.)

■ If children with reading disability are not identified by nine years of age and provided appropriate interventions, a majority tend to remain reading disabled throughout high school.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION & INTERVENTION

■ Predictive screening instruments for reading disabilities have been developed that can be administered readily to children as young as 5 1/2 years of age with good rates of predictive accuracy. These are inexpensive and can be administered by the classroom teacher.

■ Two large NICHD intervention studies support the application of direct and explicit instruction of phonological awareness and sound/symbol relationships, within a linguistic context, at the kindergarten and first grade levels. Substantial gains in linguistic and early reading skills have been observed in children identified as at risk for LD, who received such instruction.

■ Unfortunately, NICHD and other research demonstrate that substantial gaps exist between what is now known and what is being implemented in the classroom and being learned by teachers and clinicians. For example, most LD children are not identified and provided services until well into second or third grade, if at all. Also, many school districts across the country continue to teach reading through "whole language" exclusively, without any explicit instruction in phonological awareness, even though research clearly indicates that a significant number of students (15-20%) will likely not learn to read through this approach alone.

■ Teaching interventions that are effective for the child with LD are often just as beneficial for the child without LD.

To take full advantage of these new findings, teachers will need to learn how to apply this information in an effective manner. Enhanced teacher preparation for general and special education is essential. ■

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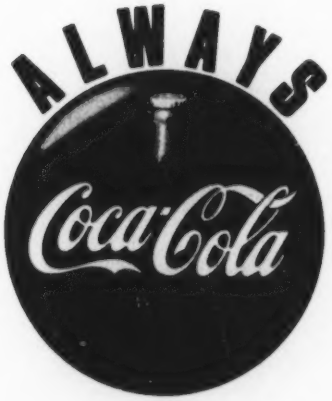

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